Rwanda: Twenty Years Later, and Striving Toward 2020

In April 1994, the world watched in horror as Rwanda erupted in 100 days of genocide, which left about 800,000 dead, 2 million as refugees, and thousands more maimed and disabled. Hutu militias sought revenge against the Tutsi after a plane carrying the presidents of Rwanda and Burundi, both of whom were Hutu, was shot down. The gruesome killings committed across the country brought to light the hostility and political tensions that had been building between the two groups for years, and which had been stoked by colonial powers.

Twenty years later, Rwanda is a very different country. It is illegal to discuss ethnic heritage, and identity papers note only that a person is “Rwandan.” The International Monetary Fund has noted that Rwanda has one of the world’s fastest-growing economies and the World Bank credits the country with the highest primary school enrollment (99%) in Africa. Fiber-optic cables have been laid across the country, with a goal of making the country a technology hub in East Africa. The country is also striving to preserve its beautiful environment and plastic bags are forbidden.

A key component to improving life in Rwanda has been in the health sector. The 2003 Constitution states that health is an inalienable right and the government has pushed to make health care services available. Each village has three locally-elected community health workers who provide basic services but also serve as a link to the more formal health sector. Community-based insurance is available, which has improved access to health services. Rwanda is on target to achieve its Millennium Development Goal in maternal health and, in 2009, it became the second African nation to attain the UN threshold of universal coverage (80%) for AIDS antiretroviral therapy. Mortality rates from HIV, TB, and malaria have each dropped by about 80 percent in the last decade, and the annual child death rate has decreased by 63%. The Lancet notes, “more than 97% of Rwandan infants are vaccinated against ten different diseases (diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis, hepatitis B, haemophilus influenzae B, polio, measles, rubella, pneumococcus, and rotavirus; adolescent girls are also vaccinated against human papillomavirus.”

“A key component to improving life in Rwanda has been in the health sector...”

continued on page 6
Dear Friends,

Sometimes it is difficult to follow the news these days, as there seem to be crisis points in every corner of the world. With disease outbreaks, drought, deadly storms, poverty, starvation, and outright war, it is easy to imagine that “these are the worst of times.” Then I recall Helen Keller’s statement and am heartened that there are many people working to alleviate such suffering.

In our cover article, you will see how Rwanda, a country that 20 years ago went through unimaginable horror, has undergone a healing process that is moving the country to a leadership position in the region. I am also humbled by the experiences that Dr. Samer Attar has had working in Syria to provide care for so many innocent civilians caught in the cross-fire of a civil war.

It is a pleasure to work each day with HVO’s amazing volunteers, who have dedicated themselves to improving health care around the globe. Their work may not make the headlines but, rest assured, they are definitely working toward the overcoming of suffering.

Many thanks to our volunteers, our members, and our generous donors, all of whom are transforming lives!

With sincere gratitude,

Nancy

Nancy A. Kelly, MHS
Executive Director
Active Project Sites
CURRENT VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

**Physicians**

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<th>Specialty</th>
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**Special Projects**

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*Please Note:* New projects are added regularly and volunteer assignments are made on a rolling basis. For the most up-to-date information on volunteer sites and scheduling, contact the HVO Program Department: info@hvousa.org or (202) 296-0928. Visit the website www.hvousa.org.
News & Events
HVO MEMBERS IN THE NEWS

Samer Attar, MD, FACS
Honored for Volunteer Service

Samer Attar, MD, FACS, was honored as Volunteer of the Year by the Syrian American Medical Society (SAMS) for his work on trips to Aleppo, Syria. Once a lovely city, Aleppo is now filled with buildings devastated by air-strikes, burnt vehicles, rubble, and a population that has endured unimaginable horror. Snipers patrol the rooftops and seem to target innocent civilians who are trying to maintain some sense of life’s daily activities.

Aleppo has been the scene of intense fighting and hospitals and ambulances have been targeted. Medical resources are scarce and medical personnel run the risk of incarceration, torture, or execution for providing care to “the other side.” As a result, an underground health care system has developed, using unmarked field hospitals in undisclosed locations.

Dr. Attar, an assistant professor of orthopedic surgery at Northwestern University, has worked in horrific conditions to provide treatment, even as bombs have exploded just outside the hospital. Trauma was constant -- the result of sniper bullets, mortar blasts, bombings -- and much of the time was spent performing amputations.

Dr. Attar noted that his visits were intense, with constant work, gunfire noise, and the adrenaline of working in a war zone. Patients filled the secret hospital and doctors lived there, sleeping on the floor and sharing the chores to keep the place running. Yet his Syrian colleagues have endured these conditions for months and some have been separated from their families for more than a year. All have chosen to remain in this war-torn city to provide care and hope for humanity.

This past spring, Dr. Attar was asked to speak at the United Nations in New York about the medical crisis in Aleppo. Then in July he volunteered with Doctors without Borders in Ramtha, Jordan, along the Syrian border, to provide assistance to those who had fled the country.

HVO is pleased that this award honors Dr. Attar for his commitment to providing care under these difficult circumstances and for his work on raising awareness of the Syrian crisis. HVO is very grateful that such a dedicated surgeon is also an HVO volunteer.

New HVO Website

This summer, HVO launched a new website. The goal was to create a space that is easy to explore - where users can learn more about HVO projects, opportunities for volunteering, ways to donate, and how to support HVO’s work to improve global health.

Most importantly, the new site offers new and better ways to show the amazing work of HVO volunteers, partners, and supporters as they strive to improve global health through education. There are many great photos and a new blog that highlights volunteer experiences, information from HVO sites, program news and more.

Visit the new website at www.hvousa.org. Members and volunteers are encouraged to share their stories and pictures from their work overseas to include on the new website and blog.
Elizabeth Downs, DNP, MPH, MSN selected for Fellowship

Elizabeth Downs, DNP, MPH, MSN, RN-C, FNP, FAANP, was recently selected for the fellowship program in the Academy of Nursing Education, part of the National League for Nursing. The fellowship is awarded to “individuals who have made enduring and substantial contributions to nursing education” and who will provide visionary leadership to the nursing education profession.

Dr. Downes is an associate clinical professor at the Nell Hodgson Woodruff School of Nursing at Emory University, where she is also Coordinator of the Coverdale Peace Corps Fellows program. In 2012 she was named a Fellow of the American Association of Nurse Practitioners. An international nursing consultant with the Carter Center, Dr. Downes has worked with the World Health Organization, the Ministry of Health in Mozambique, and the U.S. Embassy there. She served as a Peace Corps Volunteer in Benin.

Dr. Downes has been a member of HVO for over 15 years and chaired the Nursing Education Steering Committee for ten years. From December 1991- August 1992, she was the HVO staff member in Mozambique, as director for a USAID-funded rehabilitation project.

HVO congratulates Dr. Downes on her selection as a Fellow with the Academy of Nursing Education.

HVO Legacy Circle

A planned gift ensures that HVO will be able to continue to make important educational strides in the improvement of health care in developing countries.

When you write or review your will, please consider leaving HVO a charitable bequest as an investment in HVO’s future. You may bequeath a specific amount of money or a percentage of your estate. Another relatively simple option is to designate HVO as the beneficiary of a life insurance policy or the assets of a retirement plan.

If you are interested in creating a charitable bequest in your will or in discussing some other charitable aspect of your estate planning, please contact Nancy Kelly at giving@hvousa.org. If you have already made a charitable bequest, please let us know! We will honor all requests to remain anonymous.

Thank you to the following people who have made such a commitment:

Anonymous (2)  Jay S. Cox, MD  Nancy C. Cox
Richard Coughlin, MD, MSc  Kim Dunleavy, PhD, PT, OCS  Germaine Fritz, DO
Dr. & Mrs. David Frost  Leslie B. Glickman, PT, PhD, MEd  Elaine Goodall, PT, MEd
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Stephanie & Chris Murphy  Celia Pechak, PT, PhD, MPH  James Pembroke
Alfred L. Scherzer, MD, EdD  Steven Stoddard, MD  Karen Pitts Stubenvoll, MD
Dr. & Mrs. Harry Zutz
In 2000, the government produced its “Rwanda Vision 2020”, an action plan which established ambitious goals to bring the country from an agrarian-based society to one based on knowledge. Emphasis was placed on improving health standards and the Ministry of Health noted that there was a shortage of staff for care of people with disabilities, estimated at some 523,000 people.

HVO, in March 2013, was the recipient of USAID funding through a grant with World Learning to provide continuing education for physical therapists. In partnership with the University of Rwanda College of Medicine & Health Sciences and the Association of Rwandan Physiotherapy, HVO volunteers are developing and teaching courses which address key topics identified by the Rwandan therapists. There are about 200 practicing therapists in the country but most have had no further training beyond their initial therapy qualifications. HVO is training Rwandan co-teachers and, together, they are providing training to therapists from all regions of the country. The Rwanda Allied Health Professions Council is granting continuing education credits for the courses, something that is now required for therapists to maintain their licenses.

Antoinette “Toni” Sander, PT, DPT, MS developed and taught the first course on Spinal Care. Over the course of six months, each session of the course was taught to three different groups of participants, with the assistance of two Rwandan co-teachers. The three groups were composed of therapists from all over the country. Between the classroom sessions, Dr. Sander traveled the country’s back roads and hills to visit each therapist and work individually to ensure that they were incorporating their new skills properly. Since many of the therapists practice alone in remote clinics, Dr. Sander made a point of meeting with the medical director at each site, to stress the importance of physical therapy and to better acquaint the administration of its value to the community. Her efforts have certainly paid off, as interest in the courses is high and the therapists are motivated to improve their skills.

In a recent message, volunteer Linn Harding, MA, PT, OCS, noted, “The Project really is important to many of these physios here and they place a very high value on it. They nearly always ask about future courses as they see this as the primary method of increasing the quality of their patient management skills.”

In the past two decades, Rwanda has made significant strides. The country acknowledges the atrocities that occurred but has made the decision that hope for the future will be based on a healthy and knowledgeable workforce. HVO is pleased to play a role in Rwanda’s “Transforming Lives Through Education.”

Resources:
Binagwaho, Agnes, MD et al. “Rwanda 20 Years On: Investing in Life.” The Lancet, April 4, 2014
Mhute, Wadzanai “Rising from the Ashes.” AfricaRenewal, April 2014
Along with their work, volunteers have the opportunity to witness the amazing culture of the countries they visit. These photos represent some of the best captured abroad.

Above: 1st Place, Nature - ‘Pele La Pass’ by Jason Yung

Above: 2nd Place, Humor ‘On the Road to Boti Falls’ by Heather Wood

Below: 1st Place, Health Workers in Action - ‘Teaching First Aid’ by Tom Morton

Above: 3rd Place, Children - ‘Girl in Ethiopia’ by Carol Warfield
Winners

Categories for the 2014 Photo Contest included *Health Workers in Action*, *Local Scenes*, *Children*, *Nature*, and *Humor*, showing a broad view from volunteers around the world.

Above: 1st Place, Children ‘Appreciative of Dr. Kerner’s Service’ by Sherri La Civita

Above: 2nd Place, Health Workers in Action ‘Surgical Teamwork: Fixing a Broken Leg’ by Sam Baker

Above: 1st Place, Local Scenes - ‘Track to Tango Monastery’ by Tom Morton

Left: 1st Place, Humor - ‘A Little Silliness Keeps Work Days Light’ by Heather Wood
HVO received over 200 photo submissions. Winners were chosen with the assistance of award-winning photographers, Jim Cline and Karl Grobl.

Above: 3rd Place, Health Workers in Action - ‘Skupski and the Kid’ by Dylan Nugent

Above: 3rd Place, Local Scenes - ‘Donated Reading Glasses Allow Women with Leprosy to Embroider’ by Monika Mann

Above: 2nd Place, Nature - ‘Taktsang Monastery’ by Tom Morton

Right: 2nd Place, Local Scenes ‘Eating Watermelon at the Local Market’ by Susie Wood
HVO Photo Contest
THROUGH THE VOLUNTEER LENS

Winners
The HVO photo contest provides a wonderful opportunity to highlight the amazing images overseas volunteers witness around the world. Thank you to all who participated.

Left: Best-in-Show
‘First Light, Druk Path’ by Tom Morton

Left: 2nd Place, Children
‘Young Monk’ by Tom Morton

Right: 3rd Place, Nature
‘Up Close & Personal with a Baboon’ by Christopher Martin

Below: 3rd Place, Humor
‘Advertisment: At This Point, Could it Really Get Worse?’ by Darren Smith
Special Thanks

AMBASSADOR-AT-LARGE

HVO gratefully acknowledges the following donors whose recurring gifts sustain our work throughout the year...

(current as of September 26, 2014)

Dorrit Ahbel, MD
Kay Ahern, PT, CHT
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V. Ted Barnert, MD
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Emily Berry, MD
Stefano Bini, MD
Cary Bjork, MD
Linda Blankenbaker
Charles Blitzer, MD
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Larry Wolfe
Linda Wolff, MPT
Susan Wood, RN, CS, MPH, IBCLC
Valerie Woodruff, DDS, PC
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- American College of Cardiology
- American College of Physicians
- American Dental Association
- American Society of Clinical Oncology
- American Society of Hematology
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- DePuy Synthes Spine
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- New England Journal of Medicine
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- Providence Washington Anesthesia Services
- RehabCare
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- Union Ave Compounding Pharmacy
- Washington Orthopaedic Center
- Wright Medical Technologies

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