

Project Description

Background: On April 7th 1994 one of the most catastrophic events of the 21st century took a grip over the tiny East African country of Rwanda. Over the next one hundred days the world remained silent as it witnessed a systematically executed genocide that took the lives of an estimated 800,000 to one million Rwandans, the majority of whom were Tutsi. The atrocities that overcame the country of Rwanda during those torturous 100 days not only continue haunt those who survived, killed, raped, stood by, or responded heroically, but to this day prove to be obstacles the country is forced to overcome.

One such obstacle in the post-genocide era has been the vastly growing orphan population, which at certain points has stretched into the millions. In response to this, the organization Generation Rwanda founded a scholarship program for orphans and other socially vulnerable youths allowing them to pursue college degrees. In addition to providing scholarships to attend school, Generation Rwanda provides career development, educational workshops, and training programs for their students. Generation Rwanda is not only trying to provide educational outlets for Rwanda's talented orphan population, but also laying the foundation for Rwanda's future leaders as the country continues to break through its shattering past and create a prosperous society.

Project Description: On January 2, 2012 I will embark on a yearlong journey working as an English Language Associate with Generation Rwanda, which is located in the bustling capital city of Kigali. I intend for my work abroad experience to be centered around three main goals and ambitions:

- 1. English Language Instruction:** Based on recent government legislation, Rwanda's main language of instruction has changed from French or Kinyarwanda to English. Therefore, my primary focus will be to provide an English language foundation for Generation Rwanda's 185+ students. My work will include administering language assessments, holding language classes, implementing a ten-week intensive language course for new scholars, monitoring and evaluating the current language program, and developing the existing curriculum. As an English Language Instructor I will encourage my students to participate in language and culture exchanges. I will incorporate American cultural aspects into my lesson plans by introducing popular videos, books, news clips, music, and social pop culture so my students may learn how modern day American culture functions, as well as how the English language is used on a regular basis. In addition, I will provide students with readings from contemporary African authors and leaders as source of their own cultural reference and guidance.
- 2. Women's Development:** Rwanda is making strides in the area of gender equality. In comparison to the rest of the democratic world Rwanda has the highest percentage of women in parliament, however, women are still underrepresented in the business world and what could arguably be more important, educationally. Tradition has made it difficult for women to receive

equal treatment and many are still struggling with Rwandan women's newfound power and sense of security. Generation Rwanda is taking steps to end such disparities by opening up over half of their scholarship seats to women. As a Language Instructor I aim to support Generation Rwanda's view and the overall country's goal of making it a cultural norm to incorporate women into all aspects of a working society. As a result of my study abroad experience in Rwanda in 2009 I focused a major portion of my undergraduate research on women's roles in building peace in post-conflict societies. By using Rwanda as a case study I concentrated on how improving women's access to government, education, and non-governmental organizations has acted as a facilitator for peace and stability in post-conflict nations such as Rwanda. I believe I can contribute my knowledge on the subject through coordinating women's workshops, starting a Women's Development club that reaches out to local NGOs, and by creating a unit on women in Rwanda for my Language courses.

- 3. Cross-Cultural Understanding:** The vast majority of the outside world's perception of Rwanda is often centered on the misconceived notion that Rwanda is a country solely torn between ethnic identities and conflict. Through my position with Generation Rwanda I aim to reshape the world's mentality that Rwanda's only affiliation is to Genocide. As Rwanda continues to move forward and reach out for international development they are often met with controversy from human rights activists based on their violent past. Rather than merely recognizing the country's faults, I will highlight Rwanda's achievements and acknowledge the difficulties rapidly advancing societies face when trying to keep their cultures intact. More specifically, through my position as an English Language Associate with Generation Rwanda I will be at the heart of a growing society by educating its future leaders. I will absorb myself in conversations with my students and Rwandan peers on how international development stands to benefit or hinder them personally and if the world's negative perception of Rwanda can gravely inhibit their country's ability to grow.