

*Developing Leaders. Reconciling Relationships. Transforming Communities*



Rev. Celestin Musekura, Ph.D.

## ALARM Congo Empowers Women to Change Their Fate

From the desk of Rev. Dr. Celestin Musekura, President and CEO

According to “Now, the World is Without Me,” a report by Oxfam International carried out by experts from Harvard University, about 56% of sexual assaults in Congo were committed by armed men in homes in the presence of the victim’s families, including their children. About 16% were

in the fields and 15% in the forests. The number of rapes increased during military operations. More than 9,000 people, including men and boys were raped in 2009 as the government and its Rwandan military allies moved against Rwandan militia groups operating on Congolese soil (<http://oxfam.org/en/policy/now-world-without-me>).

ALARM-Congo, together with our US partners, continues to empower Congo women not to accept what is happening to them as normal even when the silence and attitude of the rest of the world towards their brutal sexual violence seems to be telling them, “we don’t care about you, we can live without you.”

ALARM-Congo is involved in Women’s Peacebuilding, Trauma Healing and Human Rights Training for Christian

women leaders from different regions and different ethnic/tribal groups of eastern Congo. They include judges, lawyers, women’s rights activists, Christian counselors, women pastors, members of Parliament, government officials and members of civil society. Between March and May, about 250 women leaders have been trained in Goma, Bukavu and Bunia regions. They have discussed women’s rights, peacebuilding, justice, conflict resolution, forgiveness, and dealing with the trauma of sexual violence.

ALARM believes that by building a network of empowered Christian women leaders with skills and tools to fight against any oppressive forces, these women will not accept the atrocities perpetuated against them, but will gently and persistently seek peace, justice, healing, forgiveness and reconciliation for their communities. These women are saying, “We want to become wounded healers by turning our pain into instruments of hope and healing in our communities.”



Trauma Healing Conference Participants

## Pastoral Leadership Training Institute - Bringing God’s Word

“When I started to serve as a pastor, I had no training whatsoever” says Pastor Gakwaya Simon, Full Gospel Church, Burundi. Many pastors and church leaders in the eight countries where ALARM serves are in the same position. Years of conflict, genocide, government corruption and poverty has created a vacuum of leadership. ALARM addresses this need by hosting conferences, workshops and other programs focused on leadership development. One such program is the Pastoral Leadership Training Institute (PLTI); a three year program designed to equip pastors and church leaders to more effectively serve their churches and communities. The participants are nominated by their denominations and meet several times a year for training focused on topics ranging from Bible and theology to

communication, reconciliation and leadership. In between the sessions, the pastors have the opportunity to practice the skills they have learned, and the ALARM staff follows up to see how the pastors are implementing what they have learned and help with questions or issues they are facing.

PLTI sessions are taught by ALARM staff and short-term teams from the US. The curriculum was developed by ALARM and is geared towards ministry in an African context. At times, one of ALARM’s partner churches will adopt a PLTI in a specific country. For example, Crossroads Bible Church (Texas) has



Foot-washing service at Kilifi PLTI

Please pray specifically for:

- South Sudan Independence Day on July 9th
- Ongoing Women’s Peacebuilding Training in Congo
- PLTI Sessions in Burundi, Kenya and other countries

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adopted the Kilifi-Kenya PLTI and is sending teams to join ALARM Staff in the training. One team traveled to Kenya in January for the opening session. By adopting the entire PLTI, Crossroads will be able to nurture relationships with the participants and be a part of the training throughout the three years. Here's what one of the attendees had to say after the January session.

Silas Abuga - "The teachings have nurtured me to become a leader who will be willing to serve others and practice what I preach."

The PLTI has an impact on the larger community as well. In Burundi, Pastor Masabo Jean-Jacques, from the Baptist Church in Nyaza-Lac,

***"I have learned that I must love what God loves."***  
**Dickson Kalama**

Makamba Province has taken what he's learned back to his town. In his words, "After realizing that pastors from my area have no training, I felt inadequate to teach considering the quality teachers we have at ALARM PLTI. But, I told myself that although I feel inadequate, I can still give my "inadequate" knowledge and skills because it will be better than nothing." Pastor Jean-Jacques is now training 31 pastors from 11 different denominations. Through the support of ALARM's friends and partners, pastors like Jean-Jacques, Silas Abuga and many others are able to attend PLTI courses, enabling them to more fully engage in discipling their churches and transforming their communities.

### Africa Reflection by Ashley Hackney

God-filled, life-changing and an opportunity of a lifetime are the thoughts on the forefront of my mind when I reflect on the incredible opportunity I experienced while serving with ALARM in Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda, Kenya, Sudan and Uganda. By God's grace, faithfulness and amazing provisions, the Lord started to change my heart and placed a desire to serve in lands I never dreamt of visiting.

Meeting with numerous child headed families has consumed my mind and heart ever since my first trip with ALARM last September. After returning six months later and greeting the families a second time, I realized the immense amount of hope, support and encouragement it gave the children. These children are strong and show great perseverance but need lots of love and security. Their childhood has been stripped from them and they are vulnerable to the world. After sitting and being with them on several different occasions they are beginning to smile, laugh and hug back. They have grown to trust ALARM and the staff, who embrace and provide for them like a family. Even with their heavy burdens and uncertain future, they now know they have a Father that will sustain them. These families were lost, but bit by bit they are being found.



Ashley and her friends in Uganda

Through ALARM, a magnificent door opened allowing the Holy Spirit to guide my steps through many cultures, projects, ministries and circumstances. We have a very awesome Father that will take us to the ends of the Earth, lifting us up while stretching and molding us in the process, and will provide doors to share His love and truth. The question is, "Will we follow?"

Ashley is a friend and supporter of ALARM. In 2010 and 2011 she spent a total of nine months in Africa working with ALARM's ministries.



Prosper Nijimbere

Prosper joined ALARM in 2008 as the Emerging Leaders Program Coordinator, Burundi. He is married to Nadine Mahoro and they have two children, Alpha Shalom Mugisha and Lynda Princesse Ingabire. Prosper graduated with a degree in Social Work from Hope Africa University, where he later worked as a lecturer.

In his role with ALARM, Prosper is able to fulfill his passion to "see young people in Burundi being better leaders and being united regardless of their ethnic, religious and regional differences for the betterment of the Burundian society." When asked how he sees God working through ALARM, Prosper responded, "I see many lives, pastors, women and youth being transformed and through their testimonies I can see the hand of God doing great things through ALARM. But I am also being transformed as I train people and as I listen to other people's teaching and experiences." Prosper looks forward to continuing his work with youth in Burundi and seeing them take the materials and teachings back to their churches and communities.

