

POWERLESSNESS

BRIGHT HOPE NEWS



Last night the power went off and for a couple of hours I was in the dark and powerless. I was with one of our partners from the DRC and he had just finished talking about the challenges they faced trying to help people thrive. Powerlessness was almost palpable. He regaled me with stories as we sat in the darkness.

That morning, three of them left home to come and meet me from across the border. Only he arrived as the others were turned back by an officious immigration officer who they had failed to bribe for the privilege of letting them out of the country. The tone of the meeting became very sombre long before the sun set and the power went off as he continued to tell me harrowing stories of abuse, corruption and trauma.

The loan programme we support there has struggled because of COVID, and some women lost everything. Daily the police, local politicians and the military come demanding their cut. Five women who had just received their next loan advance had it all stolen by their drunken husbands who beat them severely. In one case one of the women's sons, a member of a militia group, beat his mother, stole her money and took off back to his violent cronies.

The evil of corruption, the abuse of power, the hopelessness of victims and the reality of poverty brought tears to my friend's eyes. He said, "*ils sont violés de leurs droits*", "they are being raped of their rights". Evidently, it is a common phrase in Bukavu. The local people live in a context of powerlessness and hopelessness, and that's never a recipe for flourishing or thriving.

I imagine we've all felt a little powerless at times in the past two and a half years. I certainly have as some freedoms have been curbed. But to live your whole life like that, when it's fed to you in your mother's milk and it's in the air you breathe, what would that be like?

The brutal reality for many is that they have little control over their lives. They get to make very few decisions as individuals. All the big things are prescribed by your culture, your patron, or your circumstances. You truly are a victim in every sense of the word.

However, the Good News is power to those who believe – Romans 1:16. The resurrection of Jesus is power over death – Philipians 3:10. The indwelling Spirit overcomes – Zechariah 4:6 and gives overflowing hope – Romans 15:13. I could go on.

Amid all this powerlessness stands a man on a cross, powerless in the hands of brutal men but introducing resurrection power. Faith in this man gives us access to immeasurable power in the face of insurmountable weakness. And that's the bright side of the story.

The electricity came on later and we talked about communities who now have water and who told the local politicians who wanted their cut to get lost. Many people found release because along with the water came someone who cared for them and brought this message of hope.

Kevin Honore

New Partnerships Facilitator

There is a real excitement in the Bright Hope World team as we are able to make plans to reconnect with the partners that we love and value.

Kevin, Jerry, and John are all travelling currently, and most of our team have plans to travel within the next six months. It's still not easy – and poor Jerry and John were delayed leaving for Zambia because of COVID. They did finally get away a week or so late and their plans have not been too badly affected.

The flip side of the excitement at seeing our friends again is, of course, hearing the stories of how bad things have been. Kevin's story of connecting with partners in the DRC is one, but there are many more. As he says, we're all a bit weary, but in some of the places we work, the depth of suffering and trauma that people have faced is greater than we might imagine.

We are reminded as we venture out again, that our role is not simply to check books and make sure money is spent well, or even to discuss new initiatives, but to pray with and encourage people at the absolute front lines of the Kingdom. It is both our duty and our privilege to stand with them and be a source of encouragement to them for their faithful and sacrificial service.



Earlier this year Bright Hope World commenced a new partnership in Rwanda providing scholarships for young women who have dropped out of school to attend a vocational training school so they can obtain new skills. They also become part of a mentoring programme to assist them to achieve wellbeing and change. Here are the stories of two of the girls:

“My name is Claudine Nirere and I am 20 years old. I left my village and came to the city with the intention of getting a job to support my vulnerable family. When I got to the city, life gave me the unexpected.”

“I was thrown out of the place I was staying by the person whom I was working for. Then the man who volunteered to host me impregnated me and chased me out of his house. I kept striving for a life with my child until I got the news that I am going to be supported and can start studying. Now I am doing a sewing course and my performance is good. I am sure that I will earn a living from sewing once I finish studying. I am so grateful for the support and promise to perform well.”

“My name is Claudine Umuhoza and I am 19 years old. I lost my parents at a very young age and started to live on my own. This brought me into bad behaviour, and I got pregnant at 17 years. A family member who was parenting me chased me out of her house and I suffered with a new-born living on the streets.”

“Ever since then I have lived a life of struggles. But now I am thankful that I have been able to get financial support to do this course. After a month of training, I am confident of my performance, I have some idea now of what I will be able to do at the end of this course. Thank you so much.”

Read more at <https://www.brighthopeworld.com/partnerships.asp?pid=464>.

1. Pray for the people of the DRC and against corruption and war in this beautiful country. Pray for our partners and that the message of the cross would give hope to the people.
2. Pray for the young girls who are receiving vocational training in Rwanda, that this training will enable them to financially support themselves and their children and change their lives.
3. Pray for members of our team who are currently visiting our partners. Kevin Honore is travelling to Tanzania, Rwanda, and Armenia. John Vlaming and Jerry Field are currently in Zambia. This is their first visit for a number of years so excitement is high at finally being able to visit our friends again. Pray for safety for them all as they travel and wisdom in their conversations with partners.