

“PUTTING AFRICA ON THE MAP”

SOLIDARITY/FAMILIARIZATION

MISSION TO AFRICA (BURUNDI/ZAMBIA)



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What an incredible way to spend two weeks of my summer vacation! I am profoundly grateful to the Canadian Catholic Organization for Development and Peace (CCODP) and The Catholic Women's League of Canada for enabling me to experience development work in Africa. The experience was amazing, humbling, incredible, life-changing, exhilarating, overwhelming, uplifting, and at times very hard. I have returned more convinced than ever, that CCODP is doing good work and deserves the League's wholehearted support. I am grateful for the wonderful companions on this incredible journey, Archbishop Pierre-Andre Fournier, of Rimouski, Archbishop Brendan O'Brien, of Kingston, Monsignor Mario Paquette, host and CCODP President Patrick Hogan, and CCODP staff, Michael Casey, Danielle Gobeil and Francois Gloutnay. Many thanks are extended to the members of Caritas Burundi and Caritas Zambia who took care of the African planning.

One article cannot encompass the experience and therefore, I hope to share more of the experience in future editions of *The Canadian League*. Where to start? Let me try to give you a brief overview and hopefully, some idea of what the countries and experiences were like. Here goes with first impressions:

BURUNDI: B is for Burundi

- **Bare:** bare dry hillsides, bare lake horizon, people of all ages walking barefoot beside country roads, bareheaded babies on backs of little girls
- **Bicycles:** popular transportation often carrying whole families including livestock, laden with thatching material – a moving haystack, together with motorized cycles threading through heavy traffic of crowded city streets, horns blaring, bells ringing, whistles blowing
- **Birds and Beasts:** stately peacocks on a hotel lawn, ducks and chickens everywhere, long-horned rangy African cattle, herds of goats even on crowded city streets,

hippopotamuses half submerged in lakes

- **Brave:** drivers barreling through chaotic traffic, women sitting nonchalantly on the back of bicycles and mini-bikes, young teens on bicycles clinging to trucks on winding mountain roads hitching a ride at risk of life and limb, vendors swarming into traffic to sell their goods
- **Beauty:** warm smiles of people, curious children's faces in windows, colourful dress, bright African prints, cool evening breezes from the lake, enthusiastic singing and waving at Youth Centre mass, animated faces and voices of presenters as they talk passionately about their work, joy and gratitude expressed for our visit and CCODP support



ZAMBIA: W is for Zambia

- **Welcome:** friendly greetings and smiles all round whether from official greeters, gatekeepers, drivers, soldiers at the High Commission, people passing by
- **Walking:** people walk everywhere, everyone walks and walks and walks, there is always someone walking beside the long road from the airport or on the busy city streets, women carry bundles on their heads or clatter by in high heels, children of all ages in pairs or groups, mothers and children, one old woman with a cane, young men and women, singly, in pairs or groups
- **Waiting:** sitting on corners, by the side of the road, in backs of trucks, by roadside stands piled with goods for sale (phone cards, clothes, furniture, charcoal, bread, tomatoes, fruit), talking, reading newspapers, resting
- **Working:** roadside vendors, breaking up stones, women sweeping streets, servers, boys watering gardens
- **Words:** clear articulate presentation on problems and potential of the country convey faith, commitment, promise and hope
- **Wonder:** loveliness of lavender, purple haze of blossoms on tall trees, flowering shrubs and trees, red, orange, yellow vibrant against dull brown of dry season
- **What next?** It's overwhelming. †