

Africa: A continent moves to Center Stage — At Last!

by C. Ray Carlson

In coming days we will witness a crescendo of appeals to the world to help Africa – NOW!

Bono of U-2 rock group preaches it to sold-out audiences week after week. Bob Geldof will stage LIVE 8 — five simultaneous rock concerts with 100 artists on July 2 in London, Paris, Berlin, Rome and Philadelphia — just prior to the G-8 Summit conference in Edinburgh July 6. Movie idol Brad Pitt's recent interview on ABC TV and others planned, following his recent visit to Africa. These and many more reveal the passion that is building in the hearts of citizens of the world to unite and do something NOW.

We Rotarians have long been doing something to help Africa, each club or district choosing a project that meets a specific need, like digging wells, providing wheelchairs, classroom furniture — all important and that fill desperate needs in a community. But we must do something on a scale that defies common sense, as the Polio-Plus campaign was when first launched. Just look at the results — polio cases have been reduced from a 1000 per DAY to less than 1000 last YEAR!

We can do much to save lives and rescue Africans from debilitating diseases and hardships. But if there are no Jobs for those whose lives are prolonged, who actually do receive a good education, where is the Hope for them? *Giving a fish* may help for the day, but *teaching how to fish* will help for a lifetime. But even more than job skills are needed.

Millions of new jobs must be created.

Government bureaucrats are notoriously inept at doing this. They throw millions and billions of dollars at the problem, but see very little results. Very few of them have any business background and do not understand that an *entrepreneurial mindset* and the basics of how to write a business plan and receive a little micro-loan money, can make all the difference in the world .

The entrepreneurship education pro-

gram we started in Uganda in 2002 in partnership with the World Bank, other Rotary clubs in District 5300 and Edmonton and Kampala, and with Matching Grants from the Rotary Foundation, laid the foundation for a new paradigm in how to create jobs by teaching Youth in secondary schools and those just out of school: to learn Information Technology on computers, how to use the Internet for research and eCommerce, and business basics that lead to writing business plans. The program was expanded to Zimbabwe. The results can be seen at www.youthit.org.

Now our friend, Tony Bloome, AIDS Media Director at the World Bank, who created the foregoing program in Uganda, has assembled a new plan that gives more attention to the AIDS crisis. He, in partnership with Altadena Rotary Charities, has written and submitted a grant application to the US State Department for their African Workforce Development and Citizens Exchange programs. I was awed by the sophistication of his plan. It represents eleven years of experience, including two years' residence in Zimbabwe, where he and his wife Ann represented the World Bank. It knits together various non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and service groups like Rotary and Lions, to take advantage of the many specializations and experts that are already in place. When I finished reading it, I vowed to myself that I would work to raise the funds to make it happen even if the State Department grant does not come through. Bloome's dream for Africa deserves our total commitment.

So, as we move to the Rotary Centennial Convention in Chicago next week, we of Altadena Rotary and District 5300 will solicit partnerships with many African



Rotary Clubs and from other districts around the world, asking each district to *adopt* an African nation or region of the larger ones. Bloome will be in our booth (#355) with a Fact Sheet that describes his program. I will have DVDs of our Peace Conference, which gives the rationale for entrepreneurship education, microenterprise credit, and business incubators. We have asked for permission to speak briefly at the all-Africa breakfast; also at the French breakfast to recruit French, Swiss and Belgian Rotary Clubs to partner in francophone Africa. Professor Dr. Allen Roberts, UCLA African Studies Center, will come to help. Lamech Mbis, Organizational Development in Junior Achievement – WorldWide, will be there, too.

AFRICA is fully in focus now. The movie Hotel Rwanda showed how a MILLION Rwandans were slaughtered in just 100 days; it could have been averted or greatly reduced in effect, but Europe and America turned their backs and the UN was helpless. We Rotarians will not turn our backs on Africa now or ever. But your help is needed and now — Please volunteer! There is surely something you can do for Africa.

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