

# Bananas and Conflict Resolution

## Letter from Rwanda

Some of you may know that our daughter **Jen** (21) is out in Rwanda for three months. She is working part-time with **MOUCECORE**, a Tearfund affiliate, as well as gathering information on **conflict resolution** for her third year Anthropology dissertation.

*We thought you might be interested in how she is getting on, so with Jen's permission we'd like to share some extracts from a post in [her blog](#) where she describes her early experiences—which we've decorated with a couple of the photos she sent:*

"After a very fragmented and hazardous flight, I arrived in Kigali airport on Sunday the 14th. ... On Tuesday morning I was transported to MOUCECORE, where the director introduced me to everyone and talked through the various options for my stay. I also had opportunities to start exploring the local area. Without a car the only ways to get around are the 'taxis', which are basically over-crowded minibuses; and motos, which are motorbikes or motorbike-like contraptions. I was invited to a party at the British embassy, because apparently it was the Queen's birthday. It was very strange to find myself suddenly surrounded by English people.



View of Kigali from MOUCECORE

"The first week was a very trying one. For most people here English is their 3rd or 4th language, so communication has been a challenge. I also felt entirely out of place and out of my depth in the culture. Which was especially hard, as I was brought up in Kenya, so felt like it should be easy for me to adapt!

"I went to a local **church** on the first Sunday, which was a 3 hour long service, the format of which went something like this: first the adult choir sings, then the congregation sings, then the children's choir sings, then the student choir sings, then the adult choir again, then a solo, then the independent choir, then the congregation, then tagged on somewhere at the end is the sermon, before some more singing. ...



The Burundi team

"On Monday I met a **team from Burundi** with whom I was to spend the rest of the week. They had come to MOUCECORE for a kind of training week, where they would learn all about the work here. So we spent the following 4 days travelling all over Rwanda. Each day was an intense program of many hours of travelling, visiting people and churches, listening to testimonies and stories of the impact of MOUCECORE initiatives, and in-depth demonstrations of the kinds of projects in existence, how they work, and the material results. For example, I now know exactly how to create a highly productive **banana plantation**. I know I came here to learn about conflict resolution, not how to grow bananas, but what I'm learning is that even a conflict on the level of genocide is

inseparable from the most mundane details of everyday life. Though I have learnt an awful lot directly about conflict resolution, too!"

*To read the full unabridged version, see [Jen's blog post](#).*

In an email Jen adds: "My **current work task** is to write an article on MOUCECORE's work, using last week's trips with the Burundi team as my point of orientation. The idea is that this can then be used either for publication in the Tearfund magazine *Footsteps*, or just generally to send to people to raise awareness of their work. I'm very excited about the kind of work they do, their general approach and the impact it has, so I really want to be able to sell it."

*Jen will return home in mid-September, a few weeks before starting her third year in Anthropology at Goldsmiths College, University of London.*