



Dzaleka or Luwani - Home is Best!

FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

In this- newsletter we describe the visit to Rwanda of eight refugees from the camp of Dzaleka in Malawi. These Rwandans spent a week with family and friends. For most, it was a time of joyous reunion with loved ones. Some were very unlucky to find many family members and relatives dead.



Happy reunion: Josephine Uwamariya's brother is very happy to be with her.

By the end of the visit the refugees were of the view that it was safe to come back and re-settle. What they saw while in Rwanda was contrary to what they termed "falsehoods generated in camps to scare everyone out of trying to return to their country."

However, much as the refugees were assured of safety and security in their country, they were worried that earning a living would be very tough back home.

The way it is described, life in the Dzaleka and Luwani camps looks more attractive than the villages most would be coming back to. Refugees in those camps reportedly have piped water, electricity and good feeding. Children go to schools. Some refugees receive loans to carry on thriving businesses in the camps, and so on.

But this cannot be a permanent arrangement.



Martin Karori took time off to visit a shop in Kigali.

The camps - and the amenities in them - are provided by the UNHCR. Recently, the UNHCR, and the governments of Malawi and Rwanda have signed a tripartite agreement for the repatriation of Rwandan refugees. All these parties have examined conditions in Rwanda and decided there are no more reasons for Rwandans to be refugees.

This means among other things that there will be no more support for the refugee camps after a certain period of time - probably next year. All this underscores the fact that Home is the best option for all Rwandans. And even a tough beginning is better than spending life wandering from camp to camp in different countries.

HOME NEWS

Property ownership a right even to returnees

A common worry of refugees is that after a lengthy stay in exile they can never regain their property.

But the government of Rwanda has a strong policy on this. In an interview with *Rwanda Returnee News* Eugene Musime the Administrative Officer of the Rwanda Refugee Repatriation Commission said every Rwandan had a right to their property, and returnees are no exception.

"We have a national policy on property ownership," said Musime. "Every Rwandan has the right to ownership of

property, and any returnee automatically enjoys this right because he or she never stopped being a Rwandan."

People that fled in the aftermath of war and genocide are quickly helped regain their property - a process that takes place at local authority offices where true ownership is established. In case a dispute arises when an individual or individuals won't give back property, step in to solve it.

An earlier issue of *Rwanda Returnee News* described the case of one Dativa Muhimpundu of Gatenga in Kigali. Dativa fled to a camp in Tanzania. She said life was bad in Tanzania and so she decided to come back to Rwanda rather than go on with that life. "We thought if we came back (with her husband) we would face problems," she said. "But instead of

facing 'imprisonment or torture' from the government, we were helped to regain our house." She said the *conseiller* of her area in Gatenga helped them in that."

Disputes have been known to arise between returnees and family members that might have sold, or occupy their property. "These cases aren't government cases obviously," says Musime. "It is local authorities that settle such disputes."

But there is one exception to restitution of property. The government has taken over buildings and other assets that belonged to people suspected of planning, instigating or implementing the genocide. Buildings belonging to suspected instigators, such as Felicien Kabuga, are used as government offices, or area administrative offices.



At the Rwanda Red Cross headquarters where they spent the first night, the refugees posed for a group photo. From left; Nyabenda, Bahati, Umurerwa, Nyirankunzubo, Uwamariya, Karori, Gashugi.

Eight from Malawi visit Rwanda

Samuel D. Malowa who headed the Malawian delegation that accompanied eight Rwandan refugees on a 'go and see visit' is surprised that Rwandans can walk around in their towns even in the middle of the night. The purpose of a 'go

and see' visit is for refugees to see for themselves whether conditions are safe enough to come back home, or not. The visit was organised by the UNHCR in co-operation with the governments of Malawi and Rwanda. The refugees, from

the Dzaleka camp in Malawi, spent a week with relatives and members of their families in different communes.

At a dinner hosted by the Rwanda Refugee Repatriation Commission Mr Malowa said, "on one radio station, we heard that an Interahamwe attack had been foiled in Gisenyi and we almost dropped the idea of going there." Despite the alarming news, he and the other Malawians in the delegation were able to go deep in the villages of Gisenyi and found the situation was peaceful. Said Malowa, "actually the situation in Rwanda is somehow better than in our own country where it is sometimes hard to walk around freely in the night!"

The refugees were; Juste Vunabandi from Ruhengeri in the commune of Kinigi; Josephine Uwamariya of Rubavu Commune in Ruhengeri; Delphina Bahati from the Gisovu Commune of Kibuye; Anastase Gashugi of the Kivu Commune in Gikongoro; Saida Umurerwa from Nyamabuye in Gitarama; Martin Karori of Kigembe in Butare; Phineas Nyabenda and Winifrida



One on one with Rep: Josephine Uwamariya had a chat with UNHCR Rwanda Representative, Kalunga Lutato.

Nyirankunzubwo of Ngenda in Kigali Rural Province.

The officials from Malawi, as well as staff from UNHCR Rwanda and the Joint Commission for Rwanda Refugee Repatriation, accompanied the refugees to their various communes.

Juste Vunabandi was overjoyed to be re-united with members of his family. The mother of Josephine Uwamariya cried and then danced with joy when she saw her daughter she last saw in 1994. Other members of Josephine's family couldn't believe she was still alive. Many tears of emotion were shed.

The same happened to Delphina Bahati when she went to visit her aunt in Kigali Rural Province. "My aunt was overjoyed to see me," she said. And so were her old friends who thought she was long dead.

But it wasn't joy for everybody. Anastase Gashugi went to visit his parents and found out that his father and all his three brothers were dead during the war. Only his mother survived. "It was a terrible shock for me to learn about the deaths in my family," he said. Anastase said he wasn't very sure whether he wanted to come back to Rwanda, though he said he thought Rwanda was a safe country to live in now, and that he didn't feel threatened even once during his visit to Gikongoro.

Phineas Nyabenda was enraged to discover that someone had demolished his dead father's old house to build a new one in its place. One of his father's wives sold the plot of land the house was in to a stranger.

"How can I get my father's plot back now?" asked Nyabenda, who is not on good terms with his step mother. Nyabenda too was doubtful whether he wanted to come back. But he said he saw nothing to make him feel threatened in Rwanda.

Some were sad and happy at the same time. Saida Umurerwa learnt her father was

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Tour: Karori, Umurerwa and Bahati went for a short tour of Kigali.

her mother was alive and well in Kigali and they spent almost an entire night in happy chatter. Her mother thought it was incredible that her Saida was still alive.

By the end of the visit, the refugees seemed to be of the unanimous view that Rwanda was a safe country to return to, and that no harm would come to anyone that did. What worried most of them however was that life seemed much harder back home.

Said Martin Karori of Butare: "I visited my family and they were terribly poor.

"Everyone in my village seemed very poor, and I don't

know how I can begin a life cultivating sweet potatoes and beans myself." Reportedly, many refugees make a good living in the Malawian camps engaging in business activities such as running groceries, butcheries, selling second-hand clothes and so on.

But life in Rwanda isn't all bad. *Rwanda Returnee News* knows of former refugees that have reclaimed their farms and are making a living on them. We also know of educated returnees that have found jobs in the civil service, local administration and positions in organisations such as the National Unity and Reconciliation Commission.

At the end of the visit, the refugees were hosted to a cocktail party.

Sheik Abdul Karim Harerimana, Head of the Repatriation Commission told the Malawian delegation: "you have been with the refugees. You went with them to their home villages and went back to pick them again, and we have hidden nothing from you."

The UNHCR Representative in Rwanda, Kalunga Lutato said it was good that the two countries (Rwanda and Malawi) had the same intentions as far as repatriation is concerned. "On one hand, the Government of Rwanda wants to reconcile its people and has employed all possible efforts to return all its people," he said. "On the other hand the Malawian government is satisfied with the Rwanda government efforts to make the situation conducive for the return of its people."



Umurerwa's mother (left) could not be separated from her!



Rwanda Hosts Cup

Members of the Kiyovu Football Club, one of Rwanda's representatives at this year's East and Central African Clubs Championships. Rwanda is hosting the tournament and all the matches are played at the Amahoro stadium in Kigali.

In total, ten teams from eight countries are participating in the cup which has been renamed *Kagame Cup* in honour of Rwandan President Paul Kagame, who is the

tournament's main sponsor. Military side, APR are Rwanda's other representatives in the thrilling competition.

The teams are: APR and Kiyovu (Rwanda), Villa and Express (Uganda), Ulinzi Stars (Kenya), Muzinga (Burundi), Gendermerie (Djibouti), Simba (Tanzania), Eliman (Somalia) and Jamhuri (Zanzibar).

For the third time after the war and the genocide, Rwanda is hosting a major regional football tournament.

The changing face of a capital



In recent times, Kigali has undergone a change in its appearance. New buildings of heights and sizes Rwandans are not used to are going up in the city.

The building in the left side photograph is called the *St. Marie House* reportedly owned by the Roman Catholic Church in Rwanda. It occupies a site in the centre of the city, and just across it is a ten story building owned by the BCDI bank.

The right side photograph is of the new *Hotel Intercontinental*. The hotel occupies the site where the old Hotel Diplomate used to be.

People coming to Kigali after a long time often are surprised by the transformation of the Rwandan capital.

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