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RESPECT Volunteer Arrives in Bujumbura

by Logan Cochrane

In the heat and humidity of equatorial Africa, on March 26th I arrived at the Bujumbura airport and was greeted by Dieudonné Amisi Mutambala Country Coordinator for RESPECT Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and RESPECT Burundi, and is the Director of ArtHum. The meeting begins a collaboration between RESPECT International, ArtHum, and Working To Empower.

My role for this project is actually in neighbouring DRC where I will be the teacher of a one-week seminar on HIV and AIDS. Dieudonné is kindly having me at his house for the duration of my stay. The event that will take place in Baraka is in the Eastern region of DRC where many refugees are returning.

The seminar will bring together community leaders, NGO's, and health workers for a week of training and discussion on HIV and AIDS. The fifty participants were selected from all areas of Eastern DRC and will each hopefully become educators for their community.

In addition to education the program includes musical performances, drama, and provided meals. The local arrangements for the project were taken care of by ArtHum and the core teacher. Funding is being provided by Working To Empower.

While in DRC I also will visit some of the schools that are connected to RESPECT to provide information and pictures about the local conditions.

I founded Working To Empower, a Canadian NGO based in Victoria, B.C. Working To Empower asserts the equality of all people and works to equalize resources and opportunities so that the opportunity for change, such as in immediate health concerns, can occur. This year I will be working with refugees in DRC, Tanzania, and Benin concerning HIV and AIDS.

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