

Rwanda: ‘Beyond Conflict’ 2017

The project is coordinated in partnership with our organisation CFOR and a local NGO, GER, Global Initiatives for the Environment and Reconciliation, in cooperation with NURC, the National Unity and Reconciliation Commission.

The programme includes participants from three districts: Kicukiro, Gasabo and Bugesera. The participants are youth and elders, community members, and community groups, local authorities and police. Participants include survivors and perpetrators of the 1994 genocide against Tutsi, all dealing with their own personal experiences, the legacy of the genocide and the current needs of communities.

The current (pilot) programme consists of three-day Forums twice a year. The June 2017 Forum had 80 participants. The November 2017 Forum had 130 participants.

40 participants are taking part in additional training to learn facilitation skills. These trainees are also being mentored and supported to practice their learning in their communities.

June 2017 Three-Day Forum

This forum was very moving and transformative. It took place at the Foyer de Charite, Kigali, Rwanda in June 2017, with some 80 participants. (This was our second Forum, the first taking place in June 2016)

This Forum was filmed and if you would be interested to view the film, please contact us. There is a four-minute short film and a one-hour documentary, ‘For the Next Generation: Worldwork in Rwanda’ (The documentary is in Kinyarwanda and English, with English sub-titles).

As we began the forum, the group gathered topics they wanted to focus on. A concern was repeatedly mentioned that the youth have inherited the consequences of the 1994 genocide against Tutsi, including persisting genocide ideology.

With support and facilitation, youth challenged and invited their elders to go further with the process of reconciliation so that the youth do not inherit a repetition of violence. Their elders responded. With facilitation, participants interacted personally and directly - perpetrators and survivors.

Again and again people said that they never thought that this could be possible to have such personal interactions, and that it brought an extraordinary sense of hope. A survivor of the genocide spoke with another participant who she had witnessed killing people in Gahanga.



CFOR

|Hampstead Town Hall Centre | 213 Haverstock Hill | London | NW3 4QP
T: + 44 (0) 207 435 0756 | F: + 44 (0) 207 692 5801 | E: admin@cfor.info | W: www.cfor.info
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Another participant who was a perpetrator of the genocide answered questions about how he came to demonizing and killing his neighbors. A survivor asked a perpetrator to find information about how her loved one died, and to try to locate his remains, in order to be able to give him a burial with dignity. A group of perpetrators worked together with the problem of meeting people in their communities who do not want to reconcile.

June 2017 Training Days (Module 1)

This module introduced basic conflict facilitation skills, and focused on practicing attitudes and methods useful when addressing community-wide trauma.

November 2017 Three Day Forum



Our third Forum took place at the Centre d'Accueil Bonne Esperance, Kicukiro, Kigali, with 130 participants.

As the forum began, the large group spoke together about the consequences of the genocide and the issues that they felt important to discuss in facilitated interactions, as a way of strengthening community. One key issue that came immediately to the foreground was that so many women have suffered from rape during the genocide, and that the topic is taboo and difficult to speak about normally in families and communities.

This includes the issue of having children born from rape, who grow up grappling with this. Some women spoke about having been raped, and about how it was the first time they were speaking about it, and being witnessed and cared for in community.

Another key theme throughout the forum was about the importance of personal accountability for one's actions, and taking accountability for one's group, and as a human being. One essential point was that while asking for forgiveness - as an acknowledgement of one's accountability - is an essential step, it is not enough without a sense of reckoning and feeling the impact of one's actions on those who have suffered, and are continuing to suffer.

As both survivors and perpetrators spoke about their most personal and tragic experiences, there was a felt sense of community and support, as well as pain and outrage.



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A group of participants -perpetrators of the genocide - were facilitated to then work together as a sub-group with the larger group listening. They grappled and reckoned with their own personal accountability, including their feelings and emotions, as they recognized the impact of their past actions.



Another important focus of the forum was that a group of youth was facilitated to come forward as a sub-group to talk among themselves, with the larger group listening. They are children of survivors and perpetrators, now in their

20's and early 30's. They spoke about the tensions between them as children of survivors and perpetrators, living as neighbors, and their need to address the dynamics among themselves that are never spoken about directly. Their integrity in wanting to take charge of their destiny was palpable.

This 3rd forum was also filmed, and we will be making a further documentary

November 2017 – Training Days (Module 2)

This module focused on 'inner work' for the facilitator, in preparing to work with tense and polarised situations.



Following the training days, we went to a village to work with a local youth association, facilitating alongside some of our young trainees. The youth had been having difficulties to address the tensions in their midst, around being children of perpetrators and survivors, even as they are all very interested in reconciliation and their shared future as Rwandans. With facilitation, they were able to unfold and transform this tension, by recognising and feeling together each other's struggles and pain.

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