

### **Report of Trainee facilitator activities supporting reconciliation at a community level in the Districts of Gasabo, Kicukiro and Bugesera**

GER and CFOR have been implementing activities since June 2016 in cooperation with NURC, the National Unity and Reconciliation Commission, in order to support the process of reconciliation and healing of community-wide trauma from the 1994 Genocide against Tutsi.

These activities took place in three districts: Kicukiro, Gasabo and Bugesera. The activities included large 3-day Forum gatherings twice a year, coordinated by Innocent Musore of GER, facilitated by Arlene and Jean-Claude Audergon of CFOR, and supported by GER and CFOR teams. The first forum was limited to 40 participants, and our most recent forum had 180 participants. A group of 50 selected Trainees have the opportunity to attend each Forum as well as additional 2-day Facilitator Training modules following each Forum. Trainee facilitators also receive encouragement and mentoring as they reflect on their learning and facilitate within their communities.

Forum participants and Trainee facilitators included survivors and perpetrators of the 1994 Genocide against Tutsi and those who fought to end the genocide. They include community members who are elders, and youth who are children of survivors and perpetrators. They also include religious leaders, military and police.

This report focuses on how the Trainee facilitators are contributing to the process of unity and reconciliation in Rwanda. Many trainee facilitators have told us that their involvement with the Forum and Training activities of GER and CFOR have supported them in their personal healing process, which has in turn led to their profound desire to bring their experiences and training into various community initiatives.

The positive results of this work can be seen in numerous testimonies from Trainee facilitators, as well as praise and feedback from local leaders for the various initiatives that the participants have begun in their communities, which are a direct result of their participation in the Forum gatherings and Facilitator Training days.



On June 1<sup>st</sup> 2019, I met with Munyemana Deo and Rutabana Damascene from the District of Gasabo, Facilitator trainees with CFOR and GER. When we met, they shared with me the experiences that they gained by way of participating in the large Forum gatherings and training days. We particularly talked about the Training Module that had focused on dynamics of personal and community trauma.

They said that their participation in the training had helped them to more fully understand the connection between healing trauma and reconciliation. They said that their participation in the Forum gatherings and training days had enabled them to care first of all for themselves, as they had both been deeply personally affected by the genocide. In turn, they had learned to provide a platform for others to process their traumatic experiences, including how to invite people who have been traumatised to be able to talk about their experiences.

Mr. Munyemana is part of the committee of the Rutunga Sector of the Gasabo District. He started an initiative there by sharing his experiences with his colleagues and committee leaders. He asked these leaders to discuss the initiative of reconciliation and consequently they put it on their agenda. In recognition of his contribution, Munyemana received an award from the District for his initiatives in reconciliation within his community.

He said, "In my community, I used knowledge and skills from the facilitation training. I invited perpetrators and survivors to talk together about issue of damaged property during the 1994 genocide against Tutsi. These facilitated interactions were productive and effective as people were able to engage with one another and even agree on solutions. Some started paying for the properties that they damaged."

We spoke to one of the Genocide survivors who participated in these talks and he said that he appreciated the initiative because it made it possible for survivors and perpetrators to feel free to discuss these difficult issues. "Perpetrators are now able to approach us freely so that we can solve these problems. There was a personal outcome for me, that I was paid for the damage done to my property during the 1994 Genocide against Tutsi." He said that the initiative was very productive and wished it could be spread countrywide. "We are all Rwandans, we must live together no matter what."

A local leader from the community in which Mr. Deo Munyemana carried out this initiative said that he appreciated the nature of this work, and that "if there were many people trained in this kind of facilitation, this could make a significant and vital contribution to solving the many issues of damaged property throughout our communities." He recommended that the programme be scaled up throughout the whole country.

Mr. Rutabana Damascene is also a survivor of the genocide. He said that before he participated in the Forum and training activities of GER and CFOR, it seemed to him that it was impossible for perpetrators and survivors to come together in this way because of the suspicion and mistrust between them due to the historical wounds of the 1994 Genocide against Tutsi. Now, they are able to invite people to come together to talk. Perpetrators and survivors meet to discuss what is needed to find a pathway to unity and reconciliation and

these talks include the youth – the future generation. Because of that, Damascene is often invited to help and give testimonies about reconciliation in different communities.



Uwumukiza Dieudonne and Mukandanga Beatrice are also Trainee facilitators. I visited them in their community in the District of Gasabo on the 6th of June 2019, where they shared their experiences and reflections and how they are applying their learning within their community. I was very grateful to learn how the training has helped them.

Mukandanga Beatrice, a survivor, emphasized that she learned how to listen to people and how to put herself in their position to be able to feel into their problems and show them that you can feel alongside them. She said that before the training she had thought that hiding her emotions and not speaking about her feelings would help her, and now she has learned that sharing emotions in community supports healing. She said, “I am proud of the steps I have made, and that now I am helping my fellow survivors to be able to reconcile, to live together with perpetrators and improve relations.” “I’ve learned from the training to be able to address highly sensitive and traumatic topics from the genocide. I’ve learned skills to handle those difficult ‘hot spot’ moments. I really thank our facilitators for this training.”

Uwumukiza Dieudonne said that the skills he learned from the training had helped him to organise and lead community talks in his community during the commemoration of the 1994 Genocide against Tutsi. He also initiated youth talks in his community. “I used the skills to



invite teenage girls who had become pregnant and who are discriminated against in the community to be able to talk about the issues they face and to connect with their families.” This initiative had an important impact, as some of the girls were reunited with their families and were able to return to school to finish their studies that had been interrupted. “I also work with local leaders so that they can help these teenage mothers and their children within their respective communities.” Dieudonne said. “I am glad for the knowledge, skills and expertise I receive from the training and I am grateful to our facilitators.”



On 20th June 2019, I met with Safari Desire, Haragirimana Donatien, Kazanywenimana Rosine and Ndayisenga Aron in the District of Gasabo. As Trainee facilitators, they have set up a plan to meet monthly to share their learning, how they are applying their skills within their communities, and to work together on the challenges they encounter.

Haragirimana Donatien said. “When I am facilitating talks, I remember some of the techniques I learned from our facilitators, like pen spinning to select who can speak, listening attentively and giving people time. I apply the skills in our youth communities and churches including both survivors and perpetrators, and including young people who were born from rape.”

Kazanywenimana Rosine said that she used the energy and courage that she had gained from the training to initiate talks among youth from families of perpetrators. “This initiative encourages young people from families of perpetrators to talk with their parents, and to encourage their parents to tell the truth about their history, because telling the truth and taking accountability helps the youth to overcome the shame of what their parents did.” These groups of young people also encourage their parents to approach survivors’ families,

with the purpose of improving relations so that the young people can inherit a country free from discrimination. “It is not easy, but I keep trying, so that this initiative can have a big impact. Rosine said that young people from families of perpetrators appreciated these talks, and said that they were needed in order to build a better future. I thank Mr. Safari Desire, my teammate, who always encourages me.”



I met with Mutware Antoine and Uwase Pauline, from Bugesera, on June 23rd 2019.

Mutware Antoine and Uwase Pauline said that they had learned a lot from Arlene and Jean-Claude Audergon, the training facilitators. Antoine said “I learned about how to focus and give attention to someone who is telling his/her story, especially when there are such painful stories and emotions.”

Mutware said, “In the school where I work there are families who have big conflicts which affect their children, our students. I used skills that I learned from our facilitators to facilitate conflicts between parents and children. I invited parents and their children to talk. They addressed their issues and the family was able to reconcile.” Mutware has also shared his experience with fellow teachers about how to work with a child who has conflicts and problems related to the Genocide. Mutware recommends that there should be training for all teachers because of their role in supporting the younger generation.



Pauline said that a core learning for her was that approaching people, standing closer, or touching someone can be a good way to connect on a feeling level. “I practiced approaching people this way during a facilitated talk among survivors, perpetrators and children from families of perpetrators.” She also initiated discussions among young people from survivors’ families to overcome the challenges they face due to the ongoing impact of the Genocide. Participants of these talks appreciated the initiative and there is a need for more such interactive discussions.



I met Karangwa Gergoire, Mukantabana Rachel, Uwajeneza Dorcas and Mukarulinda Alice on the June 24<sup>th</sup> 2019 in the Bugesera district.

This group includes a perpetrator of the Genocide and three survivors. Mukarulinda Alice said that having perpetrators and survivors working together to find solutions to the existing challenges related to the consequences of the Genocide is contributing to the process of reconciliation.

Uwajeneza Dorcas said that she invites survivors in their village to come together to talk. “As a survivor, I have learned how to facilitate other survivors. This is based on the skills that I’ve learned in our training. I listen to the survivors carefully and invite them to share their personal stories. Many of the young people we meet were born after the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi, and some others were very young during the Genocide.”

“Before joining the training and forums I was not able to share my stories, but now I share my experiences and invite others to do the same. What impresses me is realizing that I am contributing towards building my country. As youth there is a hope that what happened will never happen again, and that we now have good leadership.”



I met with Esperance Rukundo, Kamayirese Carine, and Muteteri Francine in Kicukiro on June 27<sup>th</sup> 2019.

This team works with elderly survivors. They meet them in their homes and while helping them with basic household tasks, they facilitate conversations about their experiences during the Genocide. These elders appreciate these invitations to talk about their stories. The team is thankful to Innocent Musore for the financial support for transport and help with some of their small domestic needs. Rukundo Esperance initiated this activity as a result of her participation as a Trainee facilitator in our program. She shared her idea with fellow trainees Carine and Francine, and together they began these field visits. Esperance said, “I thank Carine for sharing her experiences and for her commitment to helping elderly survivors. The skills we acquired from the training are a resource that we use to help others.”

Kamayirese Carine said, “After participating in the forum and training activities, I invited women to come together to talk – women whose husbands are in prison because they were perpetrators of the genocide, and genocide survivors who are widows. We talk together about current tensions and how we can help our children build their future. We talk about how to not pass on the persisting ethnic divisions to our children. We want our children to help in building a brighter future, and we have the leadership in the country that supports all children, whether born from survivors or perpetrators.”

### **In closing**

Having met with these Facilitator trainees and local leaders who are featured in this report and hearing of how they are implementing the teachings in their respective local communities, I want to extend my appreciation for their contributions to the process of peace-building and reconciliation at a community level.

These and other initiatives of our Facilitator trainees make a difference. It is impressive to feel their enthusiasm, hope and commitment to facilitating a deeper dialogue - to be able to process our traumatic history and find common solutions for the persisting divisions and impact of the 1994 Genocide against Tutsi, and to promise a better future for the next generation.

It is clear that the training has been highly successful. Even if our trainees still have limited skills, they are using the skills that they have learned, practiced and seen modelled in the large Forum activities. They are contributing by the way they are changing personally, and by way of improving their relationships in community. The next generation feels the benefit, as we face our divisive history and its persistent impact, while building a vision of a shared future of unity and reconciliation.

We are committed to supporting these community initiatives and are beginning to document our learning so that it can be used by different sectors including academic researchers and partners and policy makers, in order to support post-conflict communities all over the world.

Kigali, 24th September 2019

Report prepared by Innocent Musore, GER Executive Director

Edited by the CFOR team, [www.cfor.info](http://www.cfor.info)