

***Project: Far In Far Out (FIFO) Rwanda youth, Gender awareness, Reconciliation and Violence prevention***

**Report 2022**

**Youth Training on Gender Awareness, Reconciliation and Violence Prevention  
in Musanze & Rwamagana Districts**

**Introduction**

**From 25 – 27 June 2022 and 08–10 September 2022**, GER-Rwanda conducted two youth trainings on ***‘Gender awareness, Reconciliation and Violence prevention’*** in partnership with CFOR. The trainings took place in the Rwandan districts of Musanze and Rwamagana and were each attended and opened by different officials.

In the district of Musanze the training was opened by **Mr. NDIMURWANGO Sendateze Jean** who represented the sector of Busogo in the district’s Northern Province. During the official opening, he explained to the youth that the district of Musanze was badly affected by the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi, especially in the sector of Busogo because this sector had a large number of Genocide perpetrators. He requested that the youth do their best in building unity amongst Rwandans, that they use the available opportunities presented to them, and that they work to continue building a community free from ethnic discrimination.

In the district of Rwamagana, in Rwanda’s Eastern Province, the training was opened by **Mrs. KAYITESI Solange**, registration officer of the sector of Mwulire. She thanked GER-Rwanda for working as a partner and for helping to build a Rwandan society based on equality. She said “The youth are the future, so by working with the youth especially, it builds a better future for the country as a whole.”

Innocent Musore, leader of GER- Rwanda said, “I thank the local government for their partnership with GER and CFOR”. He also thanked the organization of CFOR, who support and sponsor the project, and he welcomed the youth with an address urging them to avoid inequality and violence. He explained how violence is a barrier to peace and development and requested that the youth work together to stop discrimination and build a brighter future. He also reminded the youth that they can be the catalyst for positive change that the country so truly needs. He emphasized to them that they are the leaders of tomorrow and that with their actions they bring hope for the future of Rwanda and the world.



*Group photo Musanze (1<sup>st</sup>) and Rwamagana (2<sup>nd</sup>), after youth training sessions*

#### **a) Methods used in leading the dialogues**

During the training the participants worked in groups. They were encouraged to ask questions, share thoughts and anyone who wanted to speak was given time to share stories from their own life. Participants were also given opportunity to ask questions of the presenters, facilitators, guests and local authorities who attended. During the training, discussions were recorded on camera, so that future groups could also benefit from what was shared there.

**Abarinzi b'igihango** (those who displayed outstanding acts of courage and humanity) shared their testimonies and experience with the youth, in order for the youth to understand their journey of building peace. During the talks and workshops, participants were seated in a circle where everyone was equal. Each person was given time to express their thoughts freely and share their testimonies and ideas.

#### **b) Topics discussed during the dialogues**

- **Gender equality:** To reflect on how gender norms influence the lives and relationships of women and men and the social construction of gender (gender stereotypes).
- **Gender & power:** To reflect on how stereotypes perpetuate gender norms and to increase young men and women's awareness of the existence of power dynamics in relationships.
- **Diversity & rights:** To encourage empathy towards people from different backgrounds and living different realities. Discussing the meaning of human rights and how they impact the lives of women and men.
- **Gender-based violence:** To discuss gender-based violence and the law, and reflect on ways that young men and women can break the culture of silence and cycles of violence, particularly violence in families and romantic relationships. Explaining how violence prevents unity among the Rwandan society.
- **Parents' impact:** To encourage the youth to reflect on their parents' influences on their own lives and reflect on the future they envision for their children, including how to use the positive influences and avoid the negative aspects they do not wish to repeat.

- **Understanding the program of ‘ndi umunyarwanda’**



*Photos during training sessions in Musanze (1<sup>st</sup>) and Rwamagana (2<sup>nd</sup>)*

During these dialogues something exceptional took place, where female participants felt open to share and talk about the violence that they had personally experienced and the subsequent consequences they faced and continue to face. Others shared their testimonies and the way they overcame their own traumatic histories. Boys and men also talked about the violence which they had encountered since they were young. They also talked about the violence which they had done to others because of their ignorance of the principle of equality and their belief in the right of a sexual lifestyle.

During the dialogues, time was made to listen to testimonies from survivors of the 1994 Genocide against Tutsi and from people who saved the survivors. The group also heard from youth who had completed trainings previously and established a program of fighting all types of violence, helping to build peace.



*Photos during youth discussion sessions in Musanze (1<sup>st</sup>) and Rwamagana (2<sup>nd</sup>).*

**c) Some of the testimonies which were given.**

*Miss Emerance NIYIKIZA, from Musanze in the sector of Busogo, said that she was born from parents who did not have the same ethnicity. She was born in a family of girls only and she grew*



*up seeing her father committing violence to her mother, by beating her, chasing her away, putting her under pressure and other types of violence. “That was because my mother gave birth to girls only. Even my uncles (my father’s brothers) supported him. He even hated us until he married a second wife and they gave birth to a boy. It was said that my mother couldn’t give birth to boys and he continued to hate my mother and to be violent towards her. Today during this training, I’ve come to know that the sex of a child is determined by the chromosomes of a man. That is why I cried, because I recalled the violence which was done to my mother. Because my parents are of different ethnicities, they were also thinking that my mother was not capable of giving birth to boys. I will try to explain this to my parents. Even if it is hard for people to reconcile, at least I know the truth. We want GER-Rwanda to help us and to train our parents, too”, she said.*

**Mrs Aimee Chance MUHORAKEYE**, who lives in the district of Rwamagana, sector of Mwulire says that before being trained about Gender Equality, she used to think that the care and domestic work that men and boys do (or don’t do) in society depends on physical gender differences. She said, “I’ve come to understand that it depends on the beliefs of the society that teaches these ideas according to its way of understanding, and also depends on where one lives in the world”. She made a commitment to herself that she is going to encourage her siblings, neighbours, peers and her children to learn about gender equality, so that together they may work towards eradicating inequality.

**Mr. BIZIMANA Christopher**, who lives in the district of Rwamagana, sector of Mwulire, said: “I was 8 years old when I survived the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi. In time I came to know the people who killed my family. I hated them and felt scared of them, to the extent that I couldn’t even accept the land which I inherited from my parents. That land is located in a trading center called Mucyomba. It is where the people who killed my family during the Genocide live. Even though I am a businessman, I chose to leave that piece of land so that I would not have to live with people who killed my family. I now better understand the lineage of violence, the way it begins with people who committed it, and passes on to their descendants, until someone makes the choice to change. After learning about respecting differences in people (diversity and rights), I choose to forgive and I will go back to that place which I had vowed not to do business.”

Innocent Musore requested that some of Christopher’s peers, fellow young people, accompany him, so that he is able to visit the land, even though the person who killed his family is about to finish his prison sentence. Christopher said that by the time he comes out of prison, they will live in peace and harmony.

**Mr. UKURIKIYEYEU Alphonse Rafiki**, who also lives in Rwamagana, came to realise how he abused the power that he has. He said that he understood what violence means because in the past, he had difficulty speaking and people used to make fun of him. He said he comes from a family of Genocide perpetrators. When he met the family members of those his family killed he always thought that people knew what he was thinking. This made him feel very guilty, and that is why he had difficulty speaking. When he talked and someone made fun of him, he would immediately resort to fighting. He then realized that this is violence. He has managed to learn how to live with other people, and he has dropped some of the burden of feeling guilty for things



*that were done by his parents. He said that after listening to children of perpetrators who apologized on behalf of their parents, which in turn encouraged Genocide survivors to forgive the parents of those children, he has committed himself to take a step forward to ask forgiveness from the children whose parents were killed by his own parents.*

**d) The youth are committed to do the following:**

- Make a list of youth who have connections with the history of the Genocide: children of survivors and perpetrators, people with disabilities, children born from rape, girls who gave birth (especially those who were raped) and talk with them about principles of respect and rights.
- Support those who are children of perpetrators to stop feeling guilty, because of acts committed by their parents or relatives and the history they went through, to encourage standing against violence and help them to access the services which they need.
- Getting beyond male & female gender stereotypes which perpetuate inequality. Continue to encourage friends and families to build equality in order to prevent discrimination.
- The youth committed themselves to becoming ambassadors for their friends who faced violence, and committed themselves to preventing violence, where possible, before it happens. They committed themselves to talk to families of Genocide perpetrators and the families of the survivors of the Genocide and other neighbors in the program of Unity.

Some youth talked about how they feel guilty because of their relatives' actions, and what it is like for them if their family members who committed Genocide have not yet asked for forgiveness. The young people want to support their parents to take accountability and ask for forgiveness, but felt that their identity should not be attached to their lineage or being blamed for one's parents' history.

Participants thanked the facilitators because they came to understand more about what violence is and learned about principles of respect and equality.

While concluding, **Innocent** asked the youth to learn from 'Abarinzi b'igihango' about not being owned by history and striving for the best for the common good. This includes asking for forgiveness, forgiving, and planning for a future that is built on peace and acceptance. He strongly encouraged the youth to continue to be the center of positive change. He thanked CFOR and the government of Rwanda and he also said that the reconciliation activities which are being done in Rwanda will be used in DRC and make a difference in the world at large.

The trainings took place in the district of Musanze, from 25-27 June 2022, and in the district of Rwamagana from 08-10 September 2022. Talks were given by Mr. SHYIKIRO Gimu Ntayerwa with Mrs. MUKARUTESI Clemence (Musanze) and Mrs. MUKANIZEYIMANA Solange. Both have bachelor's degrees, both survived the Genocide against Tutsi and were trained in different forums of GER and CFOR. They found personal healing and now they are helping others.

**Key words:**

- Ndi umunyarwanda: means I am a Rwandan
- Umurinzi w'igihango: means someone who wasn't being hunted during the Genocide against the Tutsi, who managed to hide and protect Tutsis during the Genocide, risking their life, for the sake of others.

**SHYIKIRO Gimu Ntayoberwa.**

**Program Facilitator**

