

Coordination meeting with youth team leaders for reconciliation in community

FIFO Project, Nov 2022, Centre Christus Kigali

GER and CFOR



Youth leaders

The coordination meeting was held with youth team leaders from six different Districts - Gasabo, Musanze, Rwamagana, Bugesera, Ruhango and Kicukiro - to discuss reconciliation activities being carried out by youth in the community.

Innocent Musore, the facilitator, began the meeting by thanking the youth, elders, and authorities present. He also thanked Arlene Audergon, PhD and the CFOR team for their partnership and mentorship. Musore reminded the youth that they are the future leaders of the nation and must prioritize humanity and justice, while working to combat divisions and injustices, to be able to facilitate our future.

The meeting began with a visit to the Museum for Campaigning against Genocide, which the youth appreciated very much. Representatives from each district were then invited to share the activities they had been working on.

Rwamagana District

The team leader from Rwamagana District, RUTABINGWA Jerome, expressed gratitude, describing how people had often felt isolated because of the historical background, and now were meeting in organized interactions in the community. They also visited elderly couples and have initiated a farming project for youth to work together.

They also invited local leaders to participate in their interactions and worked at the Mwurire Memorial site, interacting with over 80 youth on unity and reconciliation. The team leader explained that there is a maize plantation on the one piece of land, and that the attendees were invited to come and share the grilled and boiled maize after harvesting.

In addition, they supported an older Genocide survivor through her addiction recovery by training her in cultivating the land. Their group had also assisted in resolving family conflicts in the Rwamagana district.

Ruhango District

The team leader from Ruhango District, NYIRABUGINGO Francine, shared that their group consisted of youth from both survivor and perpetrator families. They engaged in reconciliation activities, including basket weaving as a source of income. They also facilitated and supported community interactions, and training on issues of gender equality, national identity, unity, and reconciliation. They are looking for experienced couples to train young, unmarried individuals to be able to address and prevent family conflicts, an ongoing problem in community. The interactions were seen as very productive, decreasing Genocide ideology.

Bugesera District

The team leader from Bugesera District, MUSHIMIYIMANA Dathive, shared that their group had visited five schools in the district, engaging in dialogues with 5,762 youth about national identity, and establishing clubs for unity and reconciliation. They also visited the Unity and Reconciliation village, constructed a dishes dryer in the compound, and participated in conflict resolution by reuniting a couple that had been separated for 3 years. They cultivated two hectares of land for vulnerable families, harvested 148 green bananas, and used the proceeds to construct nine restrooms. They also cultivated and harvested peppers and have plans to cultivate mushrooms in the future.

All of these activities related to unity and reconciliation, as well as sustainable development. The team leader said that when they meet together, they are able to talk about history, in the spirit of working towards community reconciliation.

Musanze District

The team leader from Musanze District, BONANE Martin, shared that their group consisted of young people from survivor, perpetrator, and historically marginalized

families. Reconciliation activities take place every month. The activities included supporting families, by constructing restrooms, cultivating maize, potatoes, carrots and garlic, and assisted in buying sheep, for one person per month. They also facilitated in situations with people who had not yet paid back damages from the Genocide. Four people were assisted. They appreciated GER Rwanda for being supportive and for the training that has given them confidence.

Kicukiro District

The Kicukiro District team leader, NTIBAKUNZE Francois, organized various reconciliation activities after receiving training on national unity and reconciliation from GER Rwanda. These activities included constructing a bathroom for an elderly woman, creating small kitchen gardens in different schools, and training youth in the Gahanga sector on unity and reconciliation to prevent discriminatory language. The team also encouraged young people to provide information about people with such behaviors.

Gasabo District

In the Gasabo District, team leader RUZIGAMANZI Alex organized several reconciliation activities as well. These included training 53 youth from the Gasabo District, constructing a house for a young boy with disabilities whose mother was in prison, and working to provide a sheep to each member. They also visited a mass grave, a pit where many Tutsis were thrown in, dead and alive, and provided a training on unity and reconciliation in various schools to maintain a safe environment. The team also planted a unity and reconciliation tree in the Nduba sector, and local leaders were involved in the reconciliation activities. Local leaders were also involved in the activities.

Interactions and testimony

During the interactions, several youth shared their transformative experiences. One young person from Gahanga Kicukiro shared that he had never known anyone from his family. He had been alone with no one to turn to, feeling hopeless with many problems, including trauma. He said that after meeting GER and CFOR, he felt “raised from the ashes, able to live in society and to develop myself”. “You made me who I am today. I am now a successful businessman and I got married.”

A youth from Gahanga Kicukiro shared her story. She said that her father was a perpetrator of the Genocide against Tutsis. “Whenever I thought of it, my heart would be breaking. I couldn’t study and succeed because of these wounds. GER assisted in healing my wounds, it took time to heal. One day I met another girl who was also wounded and had left her home because of being born from a perpetrator. I interacted with her, and because of my training, was able to help her with her loneliness. Afterwards, I realized that you can’t heal someone’s wounds without healing your own.

A youth from Rwamagana shared how he had struggled with shame due to his family's role in the genocide, to the point that he could not socialize with others. He said “Whenever I saw people talking, my mind was telling me that they were talking about me. I developed a stutter, and other kids laughed at me. I always thought that it was because my family were perpetrators of the Genocide against Tutsis. The dialogues with GER helped heal my wounds. I’ve now started telling the truth about my story and that has set me free. Now, I feel a debt – to heal other people who have similar wounds as mine.”

The elders who attended the meeting appreciated the youth's contributions to developing the country, and encouraged them to stand up against violence, gender inequality, and drug abuse, and to use their strong values to facilitate change. The youth were also reminded to protect the environment and to engage in sustainable agricultural practices, contributing to sustainability, and leaving a good legacy for the community.

Participants recommended that the coordination meeting should be extended to two days.



Thank you!

Innocent Musore