

GER-RWANDA & CFOR

Reconciliation among Youth in the Musanze district



The activity was held from May 26 to 27, 2022. GER-Rwanda has facilitated dialogues aimed at healing wounds, reconciling, and fostering a better future. The dialogues were attended by more than 45 young adults, boys and girls, from three sectors: SHINGIRO, BUSOGO, and GATARAGA. Local leaders from the Musanze district were also present.

At the beginning of the meeting, Innocent Musore, who facilitated the dialogues, welcomed and thanked the participants for attending. He reminded the youth that they have the capacity to reconcile and make a change for themselves, their families, and the entire community. He told them that they can set a good example in developing mindsets that are against division, discrimination, and inequality among Rwandans. Most of those who attended the meeting were from perpetrator families, survivor families, and from the indigenous (Batwa) group.

The youth expressed their interest in learning about the 1994 Genocide against Tutsi, its main cause, and the effects of the genocide. They explained how they are facing those effects in their families, as most of the participants were born from perpetrators. The young people also expressed feelings of shame that they have because of what their parents did.

One of the participants, Chantal, said that some of her relatives participated in the genocide and when she was invited to attend the GER forum, her family told her that she would be sent to prison because of what her parents did during the genocide. Her father participated in the genocide and died in prison, so Chantal thought she would have to go to prison to finish the sentence time because her dad died before completing the years of his prison sentence. She said that it was her first time attending these types of dialogues, and that she was happy to take part. She added that now she knows the truth about these forums and so she will be able to help others who are still having the same issues, so that they don't feel ashamed about what their parents did.

One of the participants, who was born after the genocide, told us that one day she went out and met people who called her 'Interahamwe'. When she went back home, she asked her parents the meaning of that word. Her parents told her that Interahamwe are people who participated in the 1994 Genocide against Tutsi. She was very sad to be called that and lived with it for a long time. She had never told her story to anyone until she came to the forum and was able to tell it. She said she was impressed by how the dialogues were organized and how people met in small groups where they were much closer and could share their own stories. She was happy that she felt released from her story, by being able to share it with other participants who also shared their stories. She mentioned that she appreciates these types of dialogues and the method used to help people open up and share their lives. Most of the participants said that this forum was the first of its kind they have attended. One of the participants was a man from the indigenous (Batwa) group



In this forum, we had one of the Abarinzi b'igihango (peace makers) who is from the Musanze district. He shared his story about how he saved some Tutsis during the 1994 Genocide against Tutsi. He said that he refused to participate in the Genocide and as he is Hutu, he had to run away from his neighbors because they wanted to kill him for the fact that he refused go with them. He went and joined the RPF INKOTANYI army and came back with them till they liberated his neighborhood. When he came back, he found that his children had been killed because he had refused to participate in the killing of Tutsi. The army told him not to take revenge, though he had a gun. After telling his story, he advised the young people to refuse to participate in any bad activity, to fight against division between people, and to value the opportunity they are given by the good leadership, and country which includes all without discrimination.

The youth were very happy to have attended the two-day forum and they were happy with the hope that they are given by the leaders and the good policies set up that are different from the past. They thanked his Excellence Mr. Paul Kagame, the president of the Republic of Rwanda, for his support of young people and the policies which include all without discrimination. These young people have decided to become the change makers for a brighter future. They ended the forum with music. They danced and were happy to connect with each other. They said they wished they could have more days in the forum because two days is not enough and they also recommended more such trainings, as there are many more people in need.

The representative of the Musanze district closed the forum and thanked all the participants. He especially appreciated those who organized the forum, GER-RWANDA and CFOR, and asked them, if it is possible, to train more people. He promised that the leaders are ready to collaborate in this process.

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