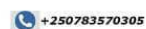
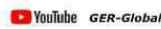




# Training of Youth on Gender Awareness, Reconciliation and Violence Prevention in Ruhango District

Far in Far Out Project for GER-Rwanda in partnership with CFOR 2022



## TRAINING NARRATIVE REPORT

### a) Introduction

During the ‘Far In Far Out’ Rwanda Youth project, GER-Rwanda in partnership with CFOR conducted youth training sessions on ‘**Gender awareness, Reconciliation and Violence prevention.**’ The trainings took place in the Ruhango district, **from 30<sup>th</sup> – 31<sup>st</sup> January to 01<sup>st</sup> February 2023** at ESK in Ruhango sector. Facilitated by Mr. SHYIKIRO Gimu Ntayoberwa with Mrs. NYIRABUGINGO Francine as co-facilitator. Francine is a secondary school teacher and a National women council leader at the Ruhango Sector level, and has been trained in several forums of GER –Rwanda and CFOR.



*Group photo of participant with the ES of Ruhango sector and other local leaders.*



The training was officially opened by the Executive Secretary of the Ruhango sector, **Mr. NEMEYIMANA Jean Bosco**, together with the head of Police, Army officers, and other stakeholders. On behalf of the Ruhango district, the Sector leader appreciated GER-Rwanda for their input in educating the community on gender equality, which reduces the number of issues the community faces as the participants put into practice what they have learned. The Executive Director of GER- Rwanda, **Mr. Innocent MUSORE** appreciated the collaboration with the Ruhango District. *He highlighted the relevance the program has had in reducing inequality, which is a root cause of conflict and violence in our families and at a societal level. Musore said, “Our hope is that young people’s actions will impact their families and the next generations.” He thanked CFOR for their partnership.*

A total number of **35** people participated in the training, 19 males and 16 females. 23 of the participants are youth and others are local leaders, religious leaders, people with disabilities and model couple’s representatives.

## **b) Training structure and outcomes**

### **Methodology used:**

The methods which we used helped participants to ask questions. Participants were given time to express their thoughts and talk about their lives and relationships. They had time to ask questions, to the guests, local authorities and facilitators. The participants shared testimonies voluntarily. In choosing a person to speak, we used the legacy of **Jean Claude Audergon of CFOR**, spinning the pen in the circle of participants. The person to whom the pen points to speaks. The young people were very attentive to find out who will be selected by the pen! The participants were given time to discuss freely and share their ideas.

The participants also had time to listen to the experiences of “**Abarinzi b’igihango**”, persons who saved or hid people during the Genocide against Tutsi in 1994. Testimony was shared with the youth and all participants, especially so that youth know about their experiences, their journey of building peace and fighting the bad norms of discrimination within people. All of the participants were seated in a circle where everyone was equal.

### **Training details:**

At the beginning of the day, each trainee introduced themselves, sharing what they expected to learn from the training. Most of the trainees expected to receive a great deal of knowledge from the discussions. They shared that their lack of knowledge about the meaning of ‘equality’ leads to many conflicts among themselves and in the community. Men spoke about being unwelcoming to the notion of ‘equality’ because their thinking has been that this means giving more authority to women over them, and that culture and society has taught them that women do not know what is



right and wrong. Some said that they hope that their own confusion will be eliminated, so that they can go back home and help others to grow beyond this confusion, too.

After this first step of introduction and discussion about the participants' expectations, **Mr. Innocent Musore** appreciated the participants who, after the last meeting on reconciliation, started an initiative and named it "**Tube umwe**", which is translated as "**Let us be one.**" This initiative involves peace-building and empowerment activities. He reminded them to take charge and lead positive changes, as they are the leaders of tomorrow. "Your actions will determine where you want this country to go."

The training covered five themes: Gender equality, Gender based violence, Gender stereotypes, parent legacy, diversity and rights and sharing excellent and model experiences of "**Umurinzi w'igihango**", those people who were not being hunted, who managed to hide and protect Tutsis during the Genocide, risking their lives, for the sake of others.



*Participant during training session*

The session's deep training and dialogue:

- Reflected on how gender norms influence the lives and relationships of women (Girls) and men (Boys) and the social construction of gender (Gender stereotypes).
- Encouraged empathy with persons from different backgrounds/ histories and living different realities.
- Focused on types of gender-based violence, and the ways that young men and women can break the culture of silence and cycle of violence surrounding violence in families and romantic relationships.





- Encouraged youth to reflect on their parents’ influence on their own lives and on the future that they envision for their own children, including how to pass on positive influences and avoid the negative ones, so that they do not repeat them.
- Clarified to the youth how violence affects unity among Rwandan society.

The facilitators answered questions and reminded the trainees that it is still possible to let go of societal norms and start practicing what is right. We discussed how the social construction of gender norms, what has been considered normal life, gives rights to some people and denies others the opportunity to live to their full potential. The participants asked questions, listened to answers, and brought in their reactions and ideas around these topics. They said that they were able to now better understand, and so felt more able to take new actions, leading to positive change.

The facilitators also encouraged the young people to grow beyond limited notions of gender, learn from their elders’ stories and exercise diversity as a new norm of life. We have now learned together and we can see the gap that needs our efforts so as to stop gender based violence in the name of culture. It is now our duty to go home and put it into practice.



**Participants listen attentively during the training session**

Facilitators explain to participants that, gender based violence, GBV, means “*any act that results in a bodily, psychological, sexual or economic harm to somebody just because they are female or male. Such an act results in the deprivation of freedom and negative consequences.*”

Mr. Bosco said: “To my understanding and observation, women also have not understood that their rights are being violated, and they keep accepting the violence and defending it, using culture as an excuse. I hope that from here both men/boys and women/Girls will have a change in mindset and go home and start putting into practice what we learnt.

On the 3<sup>rd</sup> day of the training, participants shared their experiences from the first and second day, where most of them had started putting into practice what they had learned. One of the participants shared, “Last night I sat with my mother, whose rights are being violated, and requested her to stand up for herself. Though she has not talked to my father yet, I saw that she understood what I meant as I spoke to her with relevant examples. I also reminded her that house chores are not my responsibility alone, while my brothers are also present. She brought in my brothers, and we talked about it, and this morning I was surprised to see their immediate positive reaction, helping me with

house chores. It has always been considered my responsibility, though hard and tiresome, I had to keep doing it because I thought it was my duty as the only girl in the house.”

During the training, participants shared their difficult history and experiences of discrimination, including gender based violence (physical, emotional, sexual and economical) as well as how they had inherited ideas related to the legacy of Genocide ideology, and also religious beliefs, etc.

The interactions were full and very emotional. The participants repeated that it was the first time they had taken part in this kind of interactive training, and made recommendations to have more such opportunities in Ruhango.

We select two testimonies to summarize in this report.

### **Testimonies**

*Nsanjabandi Claude, I am a 25-year-old man, and saw my father only two times. My mother and father got married illegally. My mother was of the Adventist religion, and was so in love with my father, who was Muslim. She did not know that he had another wife. She learnt about my father's other wife after two months, and so decided to go back home and start a new life. My father, a devout practicing Muslim never came after her. My mother went back to her family (parent) not knowing that she was pregnant. When she found out, her life became a misery. Her family/parent kicked her out of the house, and she became a house girl for a widow's family. The man/widow was good to her and allowed her to keep working, regardless of her pregnancy.*

*I was born into that family, but the mans' children never liked us being in the house. One day my mother entered the house and found one of the children holding a knife over me. She was terrified and decided to leave that home for my safety. Life was miserable, as we couldn't get a place to stay. My mother persevered, but the time came when all avenues were closed for her. She couldn't get another job with me, as no one wanted a house helper with a child. She decided to leave me at my uncle's place who was in prison at that time.*

*My uncle had a stable family, though he was in prison due to his participation in the 1994 genocide against Tutsi. His wife agreed to take me in and raise me with her other children. This was good, but it still traumatized me, as I was beaten almost every day for playing with the children of survivors of the Genocide against Tutsi, who were blamed for having sent my uncle to prison. I was the one who had to fetch water, as my cousins enjoyed staying home playing with their mother. I was overworked and the only place I enjoyed was at the well, playing with other children who would also have come to fetch water. I was abused physically and it reached a point I could no longer take it anymore. I told my mother who left her job and looked for a place for us to stay as a family again. Life was hard as we could barely afford to buy something to eat.*



*I remember one day we were starving and decided to call one of my aunts who lived in Kigali. She promised to send us 1,000 Rwandan francs, FRw. While I was going to check with the person she was going to send it to, I met a man who I will never forget. He wanted some people to help him with man power work, which I agreed to take on. I was so happy and felt like he was going to give me 500 FRw. I was starving, but hopeful, because I had found a way. This man gave me 3,000 FRw and I couldn't believe my eyes. I was overjoyed that he requested to talk to me, I shared with him my story and he started helping me without even knowing me.*

*I really appreciate these discussions as they have become a bridge for my healing and taking initiative to search for my father, though I don't know where to start.*

**Mutuyimana Rosine**, *I am a first born in a family of 4 children. I am 24 years old and until today, I've only seen my father two times since I was born. I have always seen my mother taking full responsibility since I was born, but I would just hear people talk about my father and his way. Growing up I always asked my mother who my father was, and instead of telling me she got very angry and replied rudely, requesting me to never ask her about him. I remember while I was in 'primary two', my grandmother came to stay with us. I tried to talk to her, too, about my father and I was surprised to get the same reaction. I always wanted to know about my father and one day someone told me a story about him and where he was, I requested the person to take me to my father. I cannot forget how anxious I was, thinking about how my father would be very happy to finally meet and embrace me. I could not stop thinking about the joy we were about to share. Everything changed when he saw me. Instead of embracing me, he got very angry and started verbally abusing me, telling me that I was going to cause problems. I went back home crying and to my surprise my mother had learnt about my secret visit to my father, and she beat me harshly, telling me to never go there. At the end of the term, I went to my aunt's place for the holidays. During my time there I asked her why my parents separated and the cause of all the hatred and sadness that we were living with. She told me that my father was a Tutsi, and that they came from the Hutu social class. My parents' marriage was not welcomed. During the time they lived together, my father was tortured, abused and hated by my mother's relatives until he decided to go. Since then, he never wanted to meet us. Life became very hard for us but my mother kept fighting for us. I was dedicated and was always the first in class but one day my mother got sick and it became very hard for us to even eat. My best friend from school asked her parents to take me in and they agreed. I went there and was able to get food and a new home. When the time came, I sat for my national exams. I passed and the family which had taken me in called my father and shared the news. He agreed to take me to school. I was excited, as it was my dream to be in a boarding school. My father took me to school by himself and paid half the school fees. I was allowed to study as he promised to pay the remaining half soon. The time came when I was sent home for money and when we called my father he never received our calls. I felt sad and wanted to drop out of school, but my mother sold her goat and small plot of land and helped me go back*



*to school. The first term ended, and I wondered how the next term would go, I didn't want to go to a government school and started looking for a job to support my mother who was now sick. I told her about my plan and she disagreed, requesting me to go back to school. A man took me in, telling me to go back to school. He told me that he was unable to pay for the school that I wanted to attend, but he insisted that I join the government school that was affordable. I never agreed, but he kept insisting, guiding me, and advising me until I finally joined the school in the middle of the term. Though the school was not offering what I was studying, I changed my combination, sat for exams, and still became the first in my class. I cannot forget his kindness and love that helped me go back to school and finish my senior six.*

It was her first time sharing her story. She had never felt safe before, to share about her life, but these discussions of GER-Rwanda and CFOR gave her a place and people to confide in that helped her open up and start her healing journey. She feels a sense of belonging in a place where there are others like her, who are overcoming their past, and making positive decisions became her light.



**Fun photo by participant in Ruhango sector**

The Facilitator showed to the participants and explained that, who we are today was shaped by our experiences growing up. But, they do not have to determine who we will become in the future. Reflecting on our own past enables us to make positive choices for the future by replacing negative attitudes and behaviors with positive ones.

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

- Avoiding the legacy of discrimination and genocide ideology, and committing to rebuilding the Rwandan community for the wellbeing of future generations;
- Getting beyond male & female gender norms, and continuing to encourage friends and family members to build equality, in order to prevent discrimination and inequality when it first arises, and to promote gender equality without discrimination, and positive masculinity among their peers and families.





The training was closed officially by the Executive Secretary of the Ruhango Sector, Mr. NEMEYIMANA Jean Bosco who thanked GER-Rwanda and their partner for the work done in the Ruhango district, particularly in his Sector. He said that he will continue to support these initiatives. It was the 1<sup>st</sup> of February, National Heroes Day in Rwanda. He ended his speech by telling the participants about 47 young boys and girls, who were attacked by the Interahamwe Militia, March 1997, at the Nyange Secondary School, while doing an extraordinary thing — refusing to separate themselves between Hutu and Tutsi. Some of them were killed on the spot, other succumbed to injuries on the way to the hospital. They were approved as national heroes, category of Imena. He requested to the young generation to become role models to their colleagues, families and community.

**Ntayoberwa Gimu SHYIKIRO, Rwanda program facilitator, GER-CFOR.**

