

**Report: Forum-Training on Recovery, Reconciliation and Prevention
Held at Foyer de Charite-Rebero, Kicukiro, Kigali, Rwanda
16, 17, 18th June 2016**

The Forum held on 16, 17, 18 June 2016 was a vital and uplifting experience for all who took part –the beginning of a new programme in Rwanda which we hope will support the national processes of reconciliation in the country. We report on this first forum, with deep feeling about the tragic and horrifying events during the Rwandan genocide, and with profound gratitude for the extraordinary national efforts that have made recovery, reconciliation and violence prevention possible. And thanks to all the participants!

1. Introduction

Global Ecovillage Rwanda is a non-governmental organisation operating in Rwanda and the Great Lakes region to promote peace and sustainable development. Its Partnership with CFOR Force for Change, UK, is to support the reconciliation process, community recovery and violence prevention in Rwanda and the Great Lakes region.



The first Forum-Training took place in the Kicukiro district on June 16-18, 2016 at Foyer de Charite, Kigali, Rwanda. Innocent Musore of Global Ecovillage Rwanda coordinated the Forum. Arlene Audergon and Jean-Claude Audergon, founders of CFOR, facilitated the Forum, assisted by Lungile Nkosi-Hill and Milan Bijelic. The Forum was in English and Kinyarwanda.

Before the Forum, the team from CFOR and the board of Global Ecovillage Rwanda had an in-depth meeting about our Partnership and the upcoming Forum-Training. The team from CFOR then visited the Kigali Genocide memorial center accompanied by board members of Rwanda, in order to more fully understand the tragedy of the 1994 genocide. They felt deeply about the terrible events of the genocide and also expressed their regret and sorrow that the International community and the USA failed to intervene – appreciating the leadership of President Kagame and the processes of reconciliation that have occurred in the country.

2. Aim of the project and this Forum-Training

The aim of the project and this Forum-Training is to strengthen the capacity of local communities involved with the process of reconciliation, violence prevention and community recovery in Rwanda and the Great Lakes.

3. Participants - Gathering in the Forum

The Forum -Training began with 37 participants gathering from the Kicukiro district. The participants included genocide survivors and perpetrators, interested community members and representatives of community organisations, including lecturers from the



National University of Rwanda and students, and government authorities including the Kicukiro district representative and a representative of the National Unity and Reconciliation Commission.

4. Opening remarks

Innocent Musore, the CEO of Global Ecovillage Rwanda and Great Lakes officially launched the project, addressing his welcome remarks to the participants and appreciating the collaboration with the Government of Rwanda and the Kicukiro district in particular. He pointed out that the purpose of this programme is to support existing initiatives - to support peace building, reconciliation and community recovery in Rwanda. Innocent Musore saluted the good leadership of the country and the infrastructure for peace and reconciliation. He added that reconciliation is a goal and process that requires collective efforts in this region where the Great Lakes communities have been affected by the Genocide. He spoke about how people are still facing trauma as a result of genocide ideology and women are still being violated in the eastern part of Congo.

Innocent Musore thanked the partnership between Global Ecovillage Rwanda and CFOR UK represented by Arlene Audergon and Jean Claude Audergon. He concluded his speech saying a warm thank you to Arlene and Jean Claude for their trust and partnership and thanked all participants and the Global Ecovillage team.

Arlene and Jean Claude thanked Innocent for his invitation and for his vision and initiative in developing this partnership. They expressed their wish to support this initiative as a contribution to the existing processes of reconciliation and recovery in the country. They added their welcome to the participants, and introduced their two Assistants, Lungile-Nkosi Hill and Milan Bijelic.

Mr. Andrew Rutaganda, the representative of the Kicukiro district addressed the group. He appreciated this initiative and said that the Government of Rwanda is committed to promote unity and reconciliation as pillars of development. He spoke about how the colonial and former regimes divided Rwandans, and educated hatred that resulted in the 1994 Genocide against Tutsi – and emphasized that now Rwanda has good leadership, which is promoting unity and reconciliation. He pointed to some initiatives to promote National Unity and Reconciliation, including Itorero and the NDI UMUNYARWANDA programme, and the district forums on reconciliation, where people are involved at a community level in the process of reconciliation. Andrew Rutaganda expressed his gratitude for this project initiated by Global Ecovillage Rwanda and Great Lakes and CFOR's partnership.



5. The Forum-Training proceedings

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Themes from participants

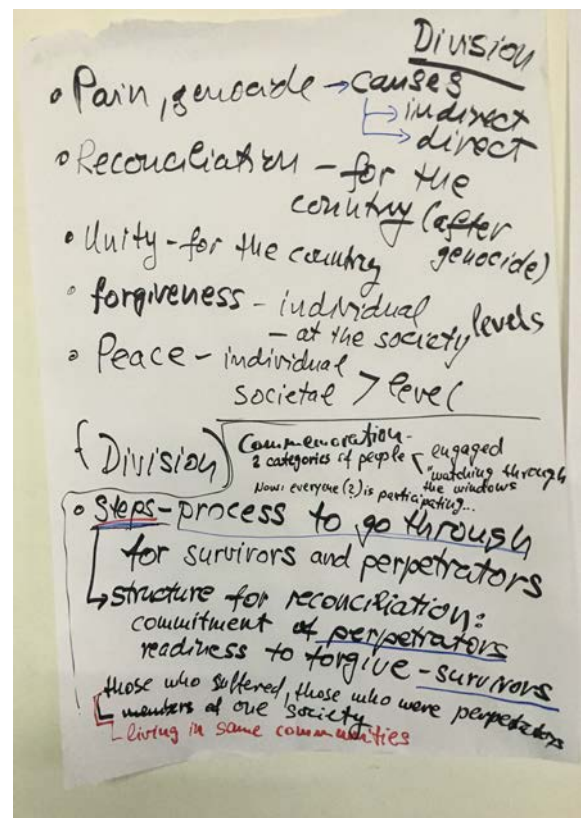
Each of the participants then introduced themselves. Arlene and Jean-Claude spoke about their work and about how they felt deeply alongside everyone, with respect for what the country has achieved to support recovery and reconciliation after the '94 genocide.

They explained that *the 3 day Forum-Training will focus on facilitating interaction among the participants to support the resources inside of individuals and whole communities, for dealing with the past, current issues, and finding pathways forward.*

They explained that the group would choose what to focus on, to support the processes of reconciliation and sustainable recovery in Rwanda. The participants first got into small groups, to talk about what is on their hearts, personally, in their families, and in community – and what they feel would be important for the whole group to discuss together during the Forum.

We then returned to the plenary and as the discussion continued, we listened and collected the many important themes.

There was a strong wish among the group to work with processes of reconciliation at a personal and community level. Several people spoke about the divisiveness that persists in community and how difficult it can be to truly forgive. They spoke of the need to hear the whole truth about the genocide from those who were perpetrators, in order to be able to forgive. Some asked about steps to recovery and reconciliation. Some spoke about depression, seeking ways to deal with the community-wide trauma and loss. Other topics included the link between economics and reconciliation; violence towards women during the genocide and gender awareness as central to the process of reconciliation; and the importance of our youth, the leaders of tomorrow who grew up seeing their parents killed or killing.



Grappling with history, community trauma, and accountability

Jean-Claude and Arlene framed the importance of grappling with history for society to focus on moving forward. This includes reckoning with Europe's responsibility – from the colonial era when divisions between Hutu and Tutsi were worked up, to the agonizing silence and inaction of the United Nations and United States when the '94 genocide could have been stopped.

Among the participants, there were perpetrators in the '94 genocide who now wanted to speak. They realized that survivors were asking for something further. Though they had given testimony in the Gacaca courts and served their sentences, perpetrators were now being asked by survivors to share personally about their experience and what happened. They struggled as they spoke about how the previous governments' de-humanisation tactics had worked on them personally and how they had gradually betrayed their own conscience as the genocide ideology normalized the killing of one's neighbours.



The facilitators spoke about dynamics of individual and collective trauma, and about



shock. After a shock, one part of oneself and one part of society has to move on, while another part remains inside the story as it repeats in nightmares or flashbacks and visceral memories. The part that has moved on may have difficulty to witness what has happened because it is too much to bear. The story repeats until it can be heard, witnessed and included in the narrative of one's life, community, society and world – so that we can move forward whole.

Survivors shared their excruciating experiences as the whole group listened with feeling and solidarity. We heard from several people that they had never told of their experiences to anyone before. As a survivor told of her harrowing experiences, perpetrators and survivors gathered close to her, to show her their solidarity with a depth of emotion hard to put into words.

A survivor made a plea to the perpetrators in the Forum to find information about the location of the mass grave that she had crawled out of as a child, and that has still not been found. We spoke together about the need to find the graves as an important step in the process of community accountability and reconciliation. Finding the missing can help survivors and perpetrators to find some sense of closure and possibility to grieve and move forward in community.

A perpetrator then shared his deep remorse and his commitment to seek the missing and contribute to creating the future. A survivor came to support him.

As a group we highlighted steps to reconciliation in communities, including the sharing and witnessing of traumatic testimony, and recognizing the power and sense of responsibility of individuals and community in shaping the future.



Compassion and vigilance

During the Forum, participants often spoke about the hatred and divisiveness in the past and how it still appears in community, and in current violence in Burundi and DRC. The facilitators sometimes represent 'roles' that are in a community. Participants can observe the roles in interaction, perceive how they are impacted by those roles, and step into a role to bring awareness to the interaction, rather than feeling only taken by such dynamics. A 'ghost role' is a part of a group that is implicit but not directly represented.

One of the facilitators represented the 'ghost role' of that part of us who hates, incites divisiveness and wants power at any cost. Participants stood up in solidarity to oppose this 'role', with a passionate commitment to caring for one another and creating a different future. Others tried to create a bridge, to reach and talk with this 'role'. Then, in a surprising and powerful gesture, a woman came forward and quietly took the hand of the 'role' that hates, saying she didn't want to leave him alone.

This is a part of all of us in our human nature, she said. The atmosphere shifted as we witnessed and shared the depth of her compassion. Another woman reminded us that this hatred is not something in the past, but very current.

A moment of stillness came over the group as we all recognized the hatred and drive for power at any cost that is in us as human beings. And that recognizing this requires both enormous compassion and vigilant awareness to say 'never again'.

As a part of ending the Forum, we invited all the youth to the center, to talk about their dreams for the future. All of the participants felt pride and support for the young people. It was very moving to hear their inspiration and dreams, from becoming a journalist, to setting up a centre for social research on conflict resolution, to becoming a neurosurgeon!

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

In conclusion, the Forum-Training participants expressed a lot of appreciation for the facilitators' expertise and approach of facilitating a deeper dialogue among community members, including survivors and perpetrators of the '94 genocide.

The participants recognized that the facilitators were supporting the group to access its own resources and capacity to work with community-wide trauma and issues of accountability and forgiveness and moving forward together.

Participants recognized how we each have a key role to play in engaging dialogue and discussion on emerging issues in our communities, in order to find joint solutions. Participants were very moved and expressed their deep gratitude for the 3 days together.

Global Ecovillage Rwanda and CFOR UK committed to continue their Partnership, and to develop a comprehensive programme of Forums and Training on peace building, reconciliation and violence prevention in Rwanda and the Great Lakes region to

contribute to the efforts and ongoing work of the National Unity and Reconciliation Commission.

In order to contribute to and strengthen the district Forums on reconciliation and economic recovery, the Partnership of Global Ecovillage Rwanda and CFOR make the following recommendations.

1. Forums: A programme of Forum Dialogue and training facilitated by CFOR and coordinated by Global Ecovillage Rwanda. The focus is on how to move forward in community, while addressing community-wide trauma, steps to reconciliation, and methods of working together to resolve current community issues. A special focus is on facilitating community-wide conversations, including both perpetrators and survivors of genocide at a personal and community level.



2. Participants: The Forum participants will include different sectors serving community and a wide range of interested community members - both genocide survivors and perpetrators.
3. Diversity: Particular groups will also be emphasized including women, youth, disabled people, those suffering trauma, and refugees in Rwanda.
4. Training: We will offer additional Training for selected individuals who are committed to developing facilitation skills for the benefit of their communities. Their training will include participation in the forums; additional training days on steps to reconciliation, working with community trauma, and facilitating conflict prevention; Training within a community project; and Mentor support.
5. Media: We will engage media to report on and enhance the value of this kind of facilitated dialogue in Rwanda and the Great Lakes, and internationally to support healing of individual and community trauma, processes of accountability and working together to build the future. This will include looking at the impact of European colonialism and its legacy in Rwanda and the Great Lakes.
6. Dissemination: Formulate and disseminate the results of our project by way of photos, video, reports and websites, in order to support the goals of the National Unity and Reconciliation Commission.



This will include documenting best practice, interviewing participants, and developing case studies of individuals and communities, useful to support further research and application of the methodology in Rwanda and the Great Lakes and internationally.

7. Publishing: Writing and publishing articles and essays in professional journals, to support dissemination of the results of the project, and to contribute to the long-term goals of preventing violence and genocide.