

## Report

### Rwanda: 'Beyond Conflict' 2018

#### CFOR and GER

#### in cooperation with The National Unity and Reconciliation Commission

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#### I. Overview of programme

The purpose of our programme is to gather together diverse community groups and to facilitate a deeper conversation needed to support the country's reconciliation process, recovery from community-wide trauma, and prevention of future violence.



The programme is coordinated and delivered by CFOR, in partnership with GER, Global Initiatives for the Environment and Reconciliation and in cooperation with NURC, the National Unity and Reconciliation Commission. The programme has been very meaningful

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and moving to all who have attended. Our methodology supports communities and countries to talk about difficult, often divisive topics. Just where communication usually breaks down is where our facilitation work begins. It is important and possible for community to interact around potentially volatile and polarised experiences and to carefully unfold sensitive and inflammatory moments that may arise, while appreciating and accessing the potential wisdom and direction within community. CFOR's facilitation approach, based in the methodology of 'Worldwork' developed by Arny and Amy Mindell, always attempts to follow the situation and culture that we are in.

The 2018 Rwandan Programme is part of a three-year pilot programme in the districts Kicukiro, Gasabo and Bugesera. The programme consists of three-day public Forum gatherings held twice a year with 130 - 170 participants. (See Participants section below.) Participants grapple - by way of facilitated interactions - with the persisting impact of the 1994 Genocide against Tutsi, in order to heal and work together to build pathways forward.

Each forum is followed by a 2 day Training Module, for a selected group of 50 trainees. The trainees attend each Forum and each of the Training modules over the 3 years. They learn and practise skills needed in order to facilitate processes of reconciliation within their communities.

In addition to the Forum gatherings, and the Facilitation training, our programme also includes one-day Forum events for particular sub-groups. In 2017, we held a forum for youth only. In May 2018, we held a meeting in a refugee camp, where one of the Forum participants lives. In May 2018, we also held a Forum day for women only. Women asked to meet among themselves in a facilitated dialogue about sexual violence and other gender related issues. In November 2018, we held a Forum day for religious leaders, to talk about their accountability during the genocide and their role in supporting reconciliation. A future Forum is being planned to focus on the needs of marginalised groups such as the Batwa or Twa.

During our visits to Rwanda, we filmed all of our activities in order to be able to create a film series documenting the nature of our work, and its potential contribution to reconciliation and transitional justice. We also write articles describing this work.

During the year, Innocent Musore and his team at GER coordinate these activities locally and engage in national conversations about reconciliation efforts. As the 3 year pilot programme nears its end there are requests from participants and the National Unity and Reconciliation commission for us to expand this needed work throughout Rwanda.

## **II. Forum participants**

Participants who attend our activities include survivors of the 1994 genocide against Tutsi, who lived through unbearable, traumatic experiences, suffering excruciating physical violence, sexual violence, and emotional trauma, in many cases having lost their whole

families. Participants also include perpetrators of the genocide, each with their own story about their actions during the gruesome genocide. These participants have gone through the Gacaca court process, were imprisoned and returned to their communities, living now with neighbours who are survivors. Our programme participants also include ex-combatants who fought to bring the genocide to an end.

Participants of our programme also include local authority representatives, military and police.

Another significant group of participants that is important to mention is the youth. They are child survivors, very young at the time of the genocide, as well as children of survivors, children of perpetrators, children from mixed families, and including children born from rape. They are grappling with their past, with their current relationships, and their essential role in shaping the future of the country.



An important feature of this kind of interactive forum of CFOR is that there is such a diverse group of participants. All community members can benefit personally from the opportunity to take part in these activities, as well as make use of their personal experiences during the programme to address the consequences of genocide in their communities, including community wide trauma, mental health issues, women's health, gender issues, sexual violence, domestic violence, property disputes related to stolen property during the genocide, education, disability, problems when perpetrators return home after serving their sentences, isolation of the elderly and more.

### **III. Forum in Kicukiro with 130 participants, 3 days, May 2018**

This was our fourth Forum, with 130 participants. After the formal opening of the Forum, we invited participants to speak about the issues that they would like to focus on, and listed these. We then distilled and selected key issues that the group wanted to work on more deeply.

During this sorting process, many of the important themes listed above were raised. We noticed that many of the participants spoke about problems faced by the youth. Since many people were talking *about* the youth, the facilitators invited the youth to speak.

#### **Inviting youth to speak**

The youth said that even with the political will in the country to achieve unity and reconciliation and the desire for all to identify as Rwandans (rather than as Hutu, Tutsi or Twa), in actuality there are painful tensions among the youth, especially between those

youth who are children of survivors and those youth who are children of perpetrators of the 1994 genocide against Tutsi.

Several young people spoke about how they are hungry to understand what happened, to know the whole truth about the events of the genocide and the motivations of everyone involved. They spoke about how their parents never told them what happened during the genocide against Tutsi, because it is so difficult for them due to personal, traumatic experiences, and because they are trying to protect their children from the pain, or from the truth.



Some youth spoke about how their parents request loyalty, or how they, as youth, feel loyal to their parents, which can in turn support divisiveness. Others grew up without parents, their parents killed during the genocide. They spoke about their own traumatic experiences as survivors (young at the time of the genocide) and as children of survivors. They spoke about what it was like to live with the stigma of being the child of perpetrators, or what it was like to have participated alongside one's father as he committed killings during the genocide. They spoke of the loneliness of being born from rape. They spoke about the importance of going deeper with the process of reconciliation, so that they can be freed to truly live together as Rwandans. Elders were surprised, (often assuming the youth are not interested) and warmed by seeing the passion and commitment of the youth, who wanted to be acknowledged and welcomed for what they can contribute to this process of reconciliation and the future of Rwandan society.

### **Perpetrators, youth at the time, taking accountability**

There were numerous touching interactions during the forum. One morning, perpetrators came forward in response to survivors' requests and need to hear perpetrators talk about their part in the genocide. One man

spoke about how he had joined a group of killers. He described how he had taken part in killing a man with his machete, then dumping his body into a hole. He began to cry as he said that the body is still there, and that he needs support to contact the authorities, so that the body can be



found and receive a dignified burial. He hoped it might be possible to identify the person by way of his clothing so that his family members, who will have not known where their loved one died, could be informed. (That day, Mr. Musore of GER helped him to make contact with the local authority to set this process in motion.)

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Survivors of the genocide are continually seeking to learn the truth about what happened to their loved ones. This is a central feature of the process of accountability needed for society to move forward after mass violence. We often hear survivors say that even being in the same room with perpetrators to talk about the genocide, shakes them deeply. Nonetheless, they want to sit with perpetrators, and they feel a deep relief when perpetrators are able to speak about and take accountability for their actions.

In Rwanda, when someone asks for forgiveness, it is a way of acknowledging what they have done, taking accountability, and asking to be received back into community. But, taking accountability involves far more than just saying “I was a perpetrator in the genocide” and “I ask for your forgiveness”. To survivors, while this is an important step, it can feel that the problem is put back on them. Survivors want more from perpetrators. Taking accountability involves feeling for and caring about the impact of what you have done, knowing you will never be able to take it back. It is not only about admitting what you have done in the past, nor explaining how it happened – It is about recognising the ongoing, continuous and current impact of your actions on survivors. When perpetrators are able to grapple with the reality that they cannot take back what has happened, and as they recognise and feel the ongoing impact of their actions, they begin to experience a different kind of sadness and remorse for the pain that they have caused others. This can lead them to want to do something that can make a difference to their communities.

One of the outcomes of our facilitated interactions is that the process of accountability and reconciliation deepens as it is grounded in feeling for one another, communication and action. Perpetrators feel called to reach out to members of their communities in order to find the missing information needed for survivors to locate missing family members and loved ones - so that they can be given a dignified burial. It is a fundamental human need to have a ritual for those who have died. Although the sorrow of the genocide may never end, it allows the surviving family and loved ones to find some closure and possibility to move forward.

The man who spoke about killing with his machete was only 14 years old at the time of the genocide. Now, as an adult, although he had been through the Gacaca process, he said



that he feels constant shame as though he is always in hiding. Importantly, he said that he hides the truth from his own children. We pointed out that in the way he was coming forward in the Forum, he was no longer in hiding. The youth in our Forum (just a few years older than he was at the time of the

genocide) challenged him directly and invited him to speak to his children, to tell the truth, for the sake of young people, and for the sake of the future of Rwanda.

As the youth were such an important part of this Forum, it was fitting that at the close of our gathering the youth prepared and performed a beautiful and touching play about the history of Rwanda; from early times; to the period of colonisation; to the 1994 Genocide against Tutsi; and through to the present period of building unity and reconciliation.

#### IV. Forum in Bugesera with 170 participants, 3 days, November 2018

Our 5<sup>th</sup> forum was held in Bugesera. When we arrived in the area, we went directly to the Nyamata Genocide Memorial. It is the site where the Nyamata Parish Catholic Church once stood and now contains the remains of 45,000 victims of the genocide against Tutsi, 10,000 of whom were killed inside the church. It was deeply moving to visit this important memorial.



Bugesera has a particular, painful history. In 1959, talk of genocide against Tutsi had begun in Rwanda, and by the early 60's thousands of Tutsi were removed from their communities, many forced to live in Bugesera, which had impossible conditions at the time, including the prevalence of Tse Tse flies. In 1963, there were mass killings of Tutsi and many fled. In 1992, Bugesera was a main site of what is now known as the 'trial genocide', which was apparently intended to test international response. Some 300 people were killed over 10 days and 15000 escaped. Human rights groups filed a report about the mass killings at the time. An Italian volunteer in Bugesera tried to call the world's attention to what she witnessed, but she was killed and is buried at the Memorial in Nyamata.

As we arrived at the forum, we sensed the excitement in the atmosphere to be meeting this time in Bugesera. We had understood that there was an outpouring of interest and had agreed to stretch our capacity to welcome 150 participants. 170 people came.



After the formal opening of our Forum, participants were invited to talk about the themes that they wanted the group to talk about and work on together. People spoke about the wounds and trauma from the genocide and the need to further the process of truth and justice - in order to support the process of unity and reconciliation in Rwanda. They spoke about the persistence of genocide ideology, and again, there was strong mention of the difficulties faced by youth.

## Survivors and Perpetrators

This led to the group engaging in profound dialogue among survivors and perpetrators, and among those who had fought to bring the genocide to an end. Young people talked about how they had questions, missing information about what had happened to their families and to their community and country.

Survivors expressed the need to hear perpetrators speak the truth. They asked that perpetrators not only admit what they have done, or say they were forced to do it by the bad government of the time.



Survivors want to know, how was it possible that you came to believe in the genocide ideology? How was it possible that you could begin killing your neighbours? How is this genocide ideology persisting today? They hope that these conversations can bring the potential to heal the past and prevent future violence.

### ‘Genocide ideology’ up close

As facilitators we realised it would be important to represent the ‘genocide ideology’ that was being mentioned many times, as a role. When something is mentioned, such as ‘genocide ideology’, but it is not represented by anyone present, it is a ‘ghost role’. Representing ‘roles’ and ‘ghost roles’ is part of our methodology, in order to facilitate a deeper interaction and to process these dynamics.

So, we said that we would represent this ideology, as a ‘role’. Though it was terrible to even speak the words aloud, we would do this so that that as a group we could go further with our interaction. We then represented the ‘ghost role’ that says: ‘We do not trust Tutsis. They are evil. They are cockroaches. They are trying to take power. We need to kill them before they dominate us again.’”

We prefaced this by talking about the tactics of demonisation and dehumanisation that have been used throughout the world to promote genocide. We talked about how people in this region had lived together before the colonial invasion of Germans and Belgians. ‘Tutsi’ and ‘Hutu’ referred to socio-economic differences, such as how many cows you had – not ethnic-tribal difference. European colonialists had created and exacerbated divisions, in order to enforce their dominance.

Some of the community elders in the Forum added essential clarification about the history of unity in the region before European colonisation and placing this in context to the current emphasis on unity and reconciliation by the current government in Rwanda.

After having represented the 'ghost role', we asked if there was someone who felt called to speak personally from the role that we had represented. Remember, this touches on horrific and traumatic memories for almost everyone in the large forum and requires our utmost care and awareness. It is important to name that we are doing this because people have frequently said that in order to go further with the process of reconciliation they need to know the truth of what happened. They want to understand how people believed the genocide ideology and how they came to brutally kill their neighbours. They want to hear the truth of what happened and they want to know what the perpetrators felt.

A man came to the front of the room and we invited him to speak personally from this 'role'. In a previous forum he had told how he had come to hate Tutsi, because of stories his grandmother told him as he was growing up. Now, he spoke about how he had



learned to hate Tutsis from what his grandmother said when he was just a boy, but he went further. Speaking personally, and from this 'role', he spoke about how, at the time of the genocide, he did not feel that he was doing anything wrong. Rather, he fully believed in what he was doing. He was proud of it and he enjoyed killing. He described how

he had been filled with hatred and the urge for revenge and power over his neighbours, originating from his childhood myths and misconceptions, and so he had relished killing. As he spoke with this kind of honesty - saying things that we may all know, but which are almost never said aloud in this world - the room fell silent. Then he began to tremble. We invited him to stay with his feelings. He spoke about his shock about what he had done, and about his remorse, which was now palpable, and he began to cry.

We soon came to a close to this session and took a break, people gathering outside. As this man went outside, he kneeled on the grass, his head falling forward and he wept. People came to him. Survivors reached out, took his hands, and also held him, thanking him for his honesty and his feeling, and for speaking the truth. Forgiving him. Other perpetrators came to his side, holding him, standing alongside him, to not leave him alone, but to join him in their shared task of taking accountability, in order to return to and contribute to community.

### **Solidarity with one's neighbours and saving lives**

There were many profound interactions throughout the 3 days. One such memorable moment was when one of the forum participants gave a detailed description of how during the 60's, as a Hutu child, he was taught to hate and demonise the Tutsi. It was testimony to how the genocide ideology was established in the 60's. He also spoke about the period of the "trial genocide" in the early 90's. He also talked about how, as a child, he was upset by seeing a Tutsi child humiliated in the classroom, and how he stood in solidarity with his Tutsi classmates. He went on to tell a very moving story about how he was working for the



military during the genocide, which gave him the opportunity to secretly take Tutsis out of the county, saving their lives. It was moving to acknowledge and remind ourselves about the courage of those who took great personal risks and stood up in solidarity with their neighbours to save lives.

### **Marginalised groups**

In one important session, as young people were asking their elders to help them understand what happened, a Batwa man came forward. He spoke as an elder to the youth about the profound sadness he had personally experienced, and that the country as a whole had experienced, witnessing Rwandans killing Rwandans. As he spoke, there was some commotion, apparently due to prejudices against Batwa. As we addressed this moment of tension or 'hot spot', we discussed the importance of recognising marginalised groups in Rwandan society. The Batwa are all too often left out of discussions about the genocide, reconciliation and building the future. Our discussions also touched on the complexity of the experiences of Batwa (or Twa) during the genocide – it is estimated that 10,000 Batwa were killed during the genocide out of 30,000 total in population. Twa were sometimes killed because they were seen to be protecting Tutsi. On the other hand, there were many Twa among the perpetrators of the genocide. Including issues facing marginalised groups in Rwanda is still unusual and very important in such a public forum.

### **Young people's strength, leadership and compassion**

One more session that we'd like to especially mention took place near the end of the forum. We invited youth to come to the middle, in order to give them an opportunity to talk about the issues on their hearts. As they gathered in the middle, it was beautiful to witness just how many young people were in our Forum. And it felt important for the larger group to acknowledge our pride and appreciation of the youth, for their contribution, and evident leadership.

The youth began to talk together among themselves, with little facilitation, bringing out the themes that they felt the larger group needed more awareness about. They spoke about what it was like to grow up with parents who were perpetrators of the genocide against Tutsi, the shame that they felt, and their need to understand and contribute to the future. They spoke about the tensions between children of survivors and children of perpetrators, and whether they could really overcome these tensions in themselves and in their families and marry. They spoke of their own traumatic experiences and what it is like to not be able to ever find out what happened to one's family members. Some young people spoke about what it was like to be born from their mothers being raped during the genocide – the social stigma and sense of isolation that they and their mothers carry.

The young people were making an urgent call to their parents' generation to go further with this kind of real dialogue, to support the goal of unity and reconciliation in Rwanda. The elder generation was deeply moved. We heard from the National Unity and Reconciliation Commission's national representative that she had no idea the young people were

suffering in this way. She was impressed with how mature they are in their understanding and in their call for deepening the dialogue. Along with this urgent call to the elder generation, the young people showed a most tender and heartfelt respect and true compassion for their parents, understanding just how difficult and sometimes impossible it is for the elder generation to recall and speak about their traumatic experiences during the genocide. This tenderness gave all of us heart for the never-ending pain of the past, and a spirit of hope for the future – as we soon came to a close of the Forum.



#### **V. Meeting among camp leaders at Nyabiheke Refugee Camp, 1 day, May 2018**

One of the Forum participants and trainees lives in the Refugee Camp Nyabiheke. After attending a Forum, he became very enthusiastic about our work and dreamed that we might come to the camp, to support the people there to meet and talk about their situation, the trauma that so many have suffered and the serious issues they are currently facing in the camp.

We were touched by his vision. He spoke to the leaders of the camp and Innocent Musore arranged our visit officially. This was a preliminary meeting with the leaders of the camp to talk about the situation at the refugee camp and the possibility of holding a forum there, if it could be useful.



Nyabiheke is located in the Gatsibo district in the Eastern Province, a few hours from Kigali. The people living in Nyabiheke are from North Kivu and South Kivu. The Camp was established in 2005 when 4500 people from Congo fled the fighting in North Kivu. Another outbreak of fighting in 2007 led to a second wave of 3600 people coming into the camp. The population of the refugee camp has grown to 15,000 following further conflicts in the DRC during 2012-2013.

We were welcomed into the camp by lots of children flocking around our jeep as we came through the difficult roads into the camp that was teeming with people living very closely together. We gathered together with several leaders of the camp, and listened as they shared their personal stories, and the situation that they are now facing as refugees and leaders at the camp. They described the overcrowded conditions and a wide range of issues resulting from people living in such

close conditions, and without sufficient resources, including sanitation and public health issues, domestic violence and abuse.

They spoke about how they had fled the Congo because of the conflict and originally thought they would be at the camp for just a few days. Thirteen years later, they are still there, and the violence in the Congo continues.

They asked about our work. Their question to us was whether we could find solutions to the conflict in DRC. Due to the on-going violence, it is unlikely that Congolese refugees can return. Their longing is for the conflict to end so that one day they can return home. They asked us to speak out about their situation in the world.

We were moved by their openness to us, their situation at the camp, and their longing to resolve the conflicts in the Congo so that they can return home. The only thing we could offer at this time was that we would talk about their plight and look at how we might be able to contribute to the needed conflict resolution in the Congo. We also said that we would still look into the possibility of holding a forum in the Nyabiheke camp, if this could be useful to them, and / or invite, and make the transportation available, for a group of people living at the Refugee camp to come to a Forum to speak about their situation.

## VI. Women's Forum, 1 day, May 2018

During previous Forum gatherings, we had talked about gender issues, and issues facing women, including the legacy of the wide-scale rape during the genocide, as well as on-going domestic abuse and sexual violence. Women had approached us saying that it is difficult to talk about their experiences of rape during the genocide, even with their own husbands, and that it would be useful to have a Forum for women only.

We had our first forum for some 40 women in May 2018, organised by GER with support from the women who initiated this activity. The facilitated Forum made space for women to speak about their traumatic experiences during the genocide, and anything they felt was important to talk about together.

Women spoke about their loss. They spoke about what it was like to lose their whole



families during the genocide. They spoke of what it was like to be in mixed marriages. They talked of their experiences of physical violence and rape. They spoke about having children born from rape, and HIV.

Deeply personal stories about these painful topics slowly and carefully found their way into the group, and women gave each other

support, solidarity and strength. In the end, there was a sense of gravity of these experiences, and a sense that much more time is needed, and more consistent opportunities to support one another.

## VII. Interfaith Religious Leaders Forum, 1 day, November 2018

This Forum for interfaith religious leaders was initiated by participants, representatives of the Muslim faith, who had attended our Forum gatherings. They told us about the good relationships between different faiths in Rwanda. They were interested to deepen the conversation among religious leaders about how they might better contribute to the reconciliation process in their communities.

Some 35 religious leaders gathered. As we opened the Forum, we invited people to talk about the issues they felt important to discuss. They spoke about their role in helping people's hearts to heal, and how important it is to find ways to support their own healing, if they want to be able to better serve their communities. They also talked about how important it is to not think of forgiveness only at a spiritual level, but rather to process the reality of what has happened at an emotional level, and in interaction. They spoke about how important it is to learn to facilitate conflicts; how to rid their faith organisations of persisting genocide ideology; how to care for those children born from rape who are unwelcome in community.

We focused on the interplay of two roles – on one side, believing that God and prayer will heal the divisiveness between us; and on the other side, a call to do more than pray – but to also work together and acknowledge what we have done, considering the physical, emotional and spiritual reality of our traumatic history and its ongoing impact, in order to find pathways to truly unite.

As some religious leaders were saying that they felt they were not doing enough to invite perpetrators to come forward, one man asked if his colleagues would come forward. His colleagues introduced themselves as religious leaders, and as a perpetrators of the genocide. (Both are participants of our Forum meetings and Training modules). Several people were visibly shocked by their openness about having been perpetrators in the genocide and their willingness to speak about it.

There was a strong realisation within the group that because Rwanda is a deeply religious society, it is their role and responsibility as religious leaders to support their communities to engage in the reconciliation process, and not leave it to prayer.



Near the end, it was noted by some of the participants that there were no representatives of the Catholic Church at the Forum, and that this was problematic due to the role of the Catholic Church in the genocide. We also represented the reluctance and difficulty people have to assume accountability, and the forum participants looked at how they could reach out to the religious leaders of the Catholic Church, to invite their participation. This facilitated conversation was timely, Kagame had met with the pope in March 2017, at which time the Pope apologised for the “sins and failures” of the Catholic Church. In the past, the Vatican had declined to take any responsibility for the Rwandan genocide, despite the complicity of some priests and other religious figures in planning and carrying out the massacres. In November 2017, the country’s bishops apologised for the “wrongs the church committed” and acknowledged that some Catholics were involved in planning, aiding and carrying out massacres.

As we closed the Forum, there was a call for these kind of facilitated dialogues to continue - in order to support religious leaders in their own ‘inner work’ and in supporting them to engage in the necessary conversations among the religious community. There was a sense of great resolve and enthusiasm to work together to contribute more to the healing and reconciliation process in Rwandan society.

### **VIII. Training Module ‘Group and Community Facilitation’, 2 days, May 2018**

In Training Module 3 we began by asking trainees to reflect on moments of learning during the Forum, and on how they are applying their learning in everyday life, personally and in their communities.

We focused on group and community facilitation skills including:

- Review of how to work with dynamics of shock, trauma and accountability
- Review of dimensions, including content, underlying roles and polarisations, and the essence dimension of unity
- Elements of group process including sorting, finding consensus, working with roles to deepen the interaction
- Work with hot spots, cool spots and shifts or transformational moments
- Contact with the deepest part of yourself, as a facilitator, from which you facilitate others

The participants practised in small groups. We invited one small group to practise in the middle, so that we could all learn. The trainees were practicing to work with roles, and to work carefully with dynamics of trauma. The small group looked at what they wanted to focus on, and one man said he wanted to talk about his father, who had been almost certainly killed by his neighbour, but the neighbour has never taken accountability.

He spoke from the role of someone seeking accountability. He told his story with great passion. He had been a fighter with the RPF, trying to bring an end to the genocide. Though he was in the region, not far from where his father lived, he was not able to reach

his father's home until it was too late. By the time he arrived, his father had been killed and his house burned down.

The small practise group agreed to try to process this situation together. The small group (and the larger group) listened and felt alongside him as he began to touch his strong feelings of grief and outrage. He spoke openly about how, as an RPF soldier seeing the utter horror of the genocide, there had been moments when he felt so much pain and outrage that he felt the urge to take revenge. But, he never did, having to contain all this emotion, because of his commitment - because Kagame had inspired and demanded of the RPF to not take revenge, to bring an end to the genocide and not replay the violence. He now became very emotional, as if all the emotion could come to the foreground for the first time. Tears came to his eyes, and he asked to go outside for a few moments to be alone – then came back.

It was an extremely emotional moment for all of us witnessing. Another member of the small group was able, with

facilitation, to stand in the role of taking accountability. Although he was not the neighbour who killed this man's father, as a perpetrator in the genocide, it meant a lot for him to say that he was accountable for the genocide, and to speak to the man personally about the loss of his father. It was a very deep and



transformative interaction, that the trainees largely facilitated themselves. Another person in this small group offered a concrete suggestion that some perpetrators from our training group might accompany him to meet with this neighbour. The group also discussed how important it was for a man to be able to show such strong emotion, in a culture where this is very rare.

During the training, we also invited presentations by the trainee teams about how they are practicing their skills, and about their planning process for the Community Reconciliation Activities.

## **IX. Training Module 'The World in Relationship', 2 days, November 2018**

This module focused on working on collective issues in relationship. We learned about 'high and low dreams' (the high moods which accompany our sense of high ideals and the low moods that we experience when those ideals are betrayed). We learned about phases of conflict and conflict resolution in relationship. 'The World in Relationship' refers to how your personal relationship issues touch on community and world issues. This includes the history and consequences of the genocide, as well as a host of other collective issues

surrounding gender and LGBTQ+, religion, age, disability, health and more. If you facilitate such issues in relationship, you will also contribute to processing community and world issues.

The trainees worked together in small groups and pairs. In one moving interaction, two people who had never spoken before practiced a training exercise together. They discovered that she had been a fighter with the RPF and he had been a perpetrator of the genocide with the military of the former regime. It was extraordinary the way they were able to unfold their history, switch roles, and uncover the deep emotions they had each experienced, and what it meant to meet one another now with their mutual interest in supporting the future of Rwanda.

At the end of the Training Module, we discussed the next steps for the trainees, as they practise and reflect on their learning and the application of their learning to their community initiatives, with mentoring support.

Each of the trainee teams shared their community activities, naming specific issues they are meeting, their successes in using new skills, and their reflections on learning. We also gave each participant the Training Handbook, translated into Kinyarwanda.



It was uplifting and inspiring to hear about the impact that trainees are beginning to have in their communities. Their activities include: organising and facilitating meetings among survivors and perpetrators; facilitating meetings among perpetrators living in the trainees' local communities, to invite them to come forward with needed information for survivors; facilitating property disputes related to the genocide; meetings among young people in to answer their questions and to facilitate a deeper dialogue; meetings with women survivors who suffered rape; meetings with elderly survivors who are suffering from trauma and isolation, in order to care for them, bring them food, and invite them to talk about their experiences during the genocide.

It was impressive to see how the trainees are embracing the underlying attitudes and basic skills of 'worldwork', inviting people in their communities to believe in their capacity to engage in dialogue and to unfold and transform difficult situations. And it was enlivening to feel the trainees' enthusiasm and dedication to contribute to the process of unity and reconciliation in Rwanda.

## X. Film and Documentation

All of the above activities have been filmed by Daniel Johnson, assisted by Ziyonzima Achel. We also conducted and filmed personal interviews with some of the participants.

We (Jean-Claude, Arlene and Daniel) are developing a film series 'Stopping the World: Worldwork in Rwanda'. Completed films can be seen on our website [www.cfor.info](http://www.cfor.info).



We are also engaged in writing articles, reports and case studies.

## XI. Violence and Genocide Prevention

CFOR's aim is to contribute to the wider field of conflict resolution and the prevention of violence and genocide. We are interested in how facilitating collective awareness through community interactions can support societies to become aware of and grapple with past and current injustice, community-wide trauma and open questions of accountability. As communities we need to a chance to reckon with our history in order to access the creativity and wisdom that we need to prevent violence and build our future.

We are creating a platform for film, articles, reports, interviews and case studies, in order to present new ideas and link this approach of facilitating deeper community interactions with various forms of transitional justice - including truth and reconciliation commissions, tribunals dealing with criminal accountability, memorials and education.

## XII. Impact and Closing

We would like to convey a taste of the feedback that we receive from participants, the local organising GER team, the local authorities and the National Unity and Reconciliation commission representatives.

Participants often talk to us about how much the programme has meant to them personally - to be able to speak about experiences that they have never been able to talk about before. One of our interpreters spoke plainly and eloquently about how shocking it was for her, and ultimately transforming, to be sitting in a room with perpetrators and survivors, where such conversations could take place.

Rwanda is in many ways a model in our world with its focus on reconciliation and its determination for everyone in the society to live together as 'Rwandans'. But, this doesn't



take away the tremendous difficulty of this task - dealing with the scale of atrocities following the 1994 genocide against Tutsi in which it is estimated that 1 million people were killed over 100 days. The will to reconcile makes it possible for people to come together – to grapple with their emotional pain in community, to deal with community wide trauma, and to seek accountability and answers to what has happened to their loved ones.

The government, the NURC, the local authorities, local associations and many individuals are deeply committed to this process of unity and reconciliation, and are eager to welcome our work, because it furthers their goals.



We have repeatedly seen highly traumatised people - visibly agitated and suffering from repeating nightmares and flashbacks - transform through their participation in a Forum. We are cautious, aware of the nature of trauma, and that individuals need ongoing ways to stay connected to themselves and to community, in order to support the shift in attitude that made such a difference.

But, our experience has shown that changes are long-lasting. We arrange with the local coordinator, Mr. Musore, to check in with individuals. Again and again, participants say that the sense of relief and healing that they experienced through their participation changes their lives. And we are happy to be able to meet participants again, especially those who are among our trainees.

At one Forum, a survivor recognised a participant who had been a soldier and perpetrator of the genocide. She had seen him shooting people at the church in Gahanga where she and many others had sought refuge. She was witness to the massacre inside the church. She recognised him, and though he didn't recognise her, he confirmed that what she said was true. After an extraordinary, highly intense and emotional interaction between the two of them in our Forum, they have gone on to develop a long-lasting friendship, and are working together as a team to reach out to others in community.

One young man, a child survivor, told us how he had been deeply depressed and suicidal, drinking heavily everyday to drown out his pain and getting into violent fights in hopes that he might die. After his participation in the forum, he said it was the first time he did not feel alone. He began planning for his future in respect to study and employment. He attended the next forum and spoke to us about how his life had transformed. With great joy, he introduced us all to a woman who he had recently asked to marry him. It is this sense that

it is possible to heal the past and to participate in creating the future that we hear again and again, for individuals - and for the country as a whole.

Perpetrators talk about being able to reach out to their community members and invite them to participate in community reconciliation activities. Youth actively support and challenge their parents to go further with the reconciliation process, and to do so for the future of their children and grandchildren.

We are aware that the strong impact of facilitated community interactions is due to the nature of community-wide trauma. People need to be able to speak about and interact with others about their experiences during the genocide, while being witnessed by and included into community, rather than staying isolated or lonely and cut off by their traumatic experiences.

The impact is also due to having the opportunity to gather and grapple with issues of injustice and accountability at a community and interactive level, which is healing for both survivors and perpetrators. We have seen how Tribunals and Truth Commissions, and in Rwanda the Gacaca Courts, have been vital for recovery and reconciliation. These processes need to be accompanied and followed by opportunities for community to meet and grapple with history at a grassroots, interactive level.

As someone plainly reminded during a recent forum, “This is not a trial”. The Forum is a chance for a deeper and often transforming dialogue. (For more information on dynamics of collective trauma and accountability, see Audergon, *The War Hotel: Psychological dynamics in violent conflict* and various related articles and chapter contributions.

<http://www.cfor.info/publications/>

In 2018, more than one mass grave with thousands of bodies were revealed. During the commemoration, appreciation was expressed to GER and to CFOR for contributing to the country’s reconciliation process. Finding the missing graves gives a chance for those individuals killed during the genocide to finally receive a dignified burial, and for their families and loved ones to find some closure, to grieve and move forward with their lives.

When thinking about the impact of processes of accountability on survivors, perpetrators and whole communities, it is important to remind ourselves of the international community’s lack of intervention when the genocide could have easily been stopped. We need to also reckon with the history and legacy of European colonialism in Africa. The genocide can be directly linked back to the times when Germany and then Belgium colonised the region, creating and exacerbating divisions between Hutu and Tutsi.

As white and European facilitators, it is important that we are aware of the history and ongoing impact of racism and white supremacy that fueled the atrocities of colonialism and the exploitation of resources, and that we reckon with its ongoing impact and our accountability. When facilitating, it is important to not leave the perpetrators alone in this role of taking accountability. In one forum, participants also spoke about the role of the

French during the 1994 genocide against Tutsi. They asked us to look into it, and to talk about it in Europe. Very recently, now that 25 years has passed and files have been opened, Macron has just ordered that a formal investigation begins into France's role in the 1994 genocide.

### **In closing**

As this report of our work in 2018 comes to a close, we feel grateful for being able to contribute to the reconciliation process in Rwanda.

We respect all the forum participants and trainees, with gratitude for their heart and commitment. We especially thank Innocent Musore for his vision and



courage, and for the work of the GER team in the local coordination, engaging participants, local authorities, the NURC, and the media that has reported on our activities. We also thank the CFOR team, the film-making team and all the interpreters! We also thank the government of Rwanda, and the National Unity and Reconciliation Commission for their ongoing remarkable work and dedication.

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