

GER-Rwanda gathers youth group leaders to dialogue on reconciliation



A consultative meeting that attracted fifty youth group leaders from across the Districts of Bugesera, Gasabo, Kicukiro, Musanze, Ruhango and Rwamagana was held on April 5th, 2022 at Centre Christus Urumuri in Remera Sector, in Gasabo District.

A one-day consultative dialogue was organized by Global Initiative for Environment and Reconciliation (GER-Rwanda) in partnership with Community Force for Change (CFOR) was aimed at bringing together youth group leaders in unity, reconciliation and development activities to see together how members can positively contribute to the implementation of planned activities during the 28th Commemoration of Genocide against the Tutsi.



Innocent Musore, The Executive Director of GER-Rwanda Opening the event.



In his opening remarks, the Executive Director for Global Initiative for Environment and Reconciliation Mr. Musore Innocent welcomed dignitaries from different organizations including; Ms. Murebwayire Josephine, a Unity Champion at the national level, Rev. Dr. Antoine Rutayisire, from the Anglican church of Rwanda, Gasabo District representative, representatives of Security organs (National Police and the RDF), GER representatives at District level and Youth Group Leaders as well.

Mr. Musore urged the youth leaders to be well versed with transformative leadership for the sake of decent unity and reconciliation among them. He also advised them to act as agents of change for the betterment of the society. "If you are to be good ambassadors of change you need to first change, be healed and then help others to heal" he observed. The aim of this program is preventing trans-generational trauma, support youth to go beyond their historical wounds and build a shared future we want. He thanked the leadership of the country for reconciliation vision and heaped that the model is helping others countries.

Madam Murebwayire told participants that GER Rwanda had for the last six years been involved in contributing towards unity, reconciliation, social and economic transformation of the country aimed at ensuring unity, reconciliation and healing which has had a positive impact in helping others within the country and region to heal and live harmoniously with their neighbours.

“You need to first take care of yourself to heal the wounds, to reconcile and unite, then you be in position to assist those you live with in your families and the communities around you and this would give a positive change to the whole country” she said.

In his presentation to the youth Group Leaders who attended the dialogue, Rev. Dr. Antoine Rutayisire tackled the transformative Leadership deeply and urged all the youth to have a sound mind and positive ideas to be easily driven away from their beliefs as this would enable them to be good future leaders.

Rev. DR. Antoine Rutayisire makes presentation during a consultative meeting.



“As youth you should not be tails of social media and telephone but rather strive to become heads as you convey reconciliation messages to the rest in the community in order to heal the hearts of many”, he said.

He also noted that to become a good leader does not necessarily require someone to have been elected on any leadership level within the government, but a good leader is any person who decides to become an agent of a positive change wherever he or she may



be and those changes should be those that are beneficial to every individual in community. "Let us endeavour to become the agents of change and for the sake of peace and development", he emphasized.

Rev. Dr. Rutayisire also testified on his life-challenging situation where he passed through during the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi. How he survived, how he reconciled with those who killed his family members through the word of God and how he has decided to fight any kind of divisionism in the country. He went on to say he has been involved in mobilizing and sensitizing Rwandans about the need for reconciliation and unity which he said has made a positive impact to the victims of the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi.

During the question and answer session, some youth revealed their heartfelt love and honour they accord to Rev. Dr. Antoine Rutayisire by saying that he was among a few elders the youth regard as a living example and an icon of hope, peace and love, and how it was like a dream to have met him. At this time, some of the youth shared the challenges they face in their families and he took this opportunity to advise them on how best they could address and overcome such challenges. "The journey is still on, I say this as a pastor who receives a lot of such problems from different circles of people; in some instances, there are some families that refuse marriages of their sons and daughters on the grounds of ethnic differences" he observed. He said that some come with such words and say: ***"pastor uzi ko nasanze wa muntu ari ikivange"*** Literally meaning ***"pastor do you know that the other person is mixed blood and he or she decides to decline a marriage offer."*** He then said that if we could have many organizations that work as GER-Rwanda, we can change the perception of many.

Ms. Murebwayire Josephine, the unity champion at the national level was also given an opportunity to testify before the youth where she used the opportunity to share her life story before, during and after the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi.



Murebwayire Josephine delivers her word during a consultative meeting.

"I was killed and resurrected but within the unbearable pain, despite of the fact that all my children were killed, I decided to stand in the gap by raising and taking care of the children of those who had been killed, I picked them from the dead that were littered lifeless. I accepted all those children who came to me, I took care of them, raise them up until they grew up and got married" she said in agony.

She explained that her life was characterized by a strong heart and zeal that helped her to forgive those who killed her family members and children. She said that she forgave the children of those that killed her families. She urged the youth to be the new generational heroes by changing their mind-set and engage themselves in helping others to reconcile and heal.



“If you are to change a lone, it will be useless because the activities you are engaged in will be fruitless. The best thing is for you to change and participate in changing others in all your endeavours” she noted.

While exchanging their experiences and interventions around the country, Dative Mushimiyimana a youth Group leader of “**Ubumwe buzira Imbereka group**” that operates in Bugesera District, extended her thanks to GER-Rwanda for the training and knowledge acquired and the mobilization she received to help others in her community which she said has yielded positive results where the group now uses films, poems and plays to convey unity and reconciliation messages to the rest of community members including children and family members.



One Clemantine Mukarutesi from Rwamagana District applauded GER for excellent work towards inculcating unity and reconciliation among the youth.

She observed that the initiative has given her hope and strength to convey the message of love in Rwamagana community. "GER Rwanda has done the needful in line with supporting reconciliation activities across the District. We have benefited a lot because the initiative has enabled us attain holistic development", she said.

In Gasabo, Rutabana Damascene revealed that after forgiving those who killed his family members, the money he was paid in damages, were used to invite local leaders and neighbours to have a get together party in which he initiated a group that united all his community aimed at improving unity, reconciliation and sensitizing the rest in the community which he attributed the support from GER-Rwanda, that not only trained him, but helped many to help others with the social and financial support extended to them. "Our group was given a donation of **Rwf400,000** by GER-Rwanda which we used in our interventions",

In Kicukiro District, Hakizimana Patrick, the one who participated in carrying out the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi revealed that he lived a life of regret and cursed within the Rwandan community

“After training and sensitization by GER-Rwanda, I started a healing process, starting with my own family, I asked for forgiveness from my wife and children because I ashamed them; when I tasted the benefits of reconciliation, I started a group and looked for those who took part in the Genocide to accept their role and we now have the same agenda to change others after we had changed, this is because there are many who complete their sentences and return to their families while still harbouring Genocide ideologies".

In Ruhango District they said that they had started unity and reconciliation agenda through farming. One Matabaro David, the Leader of Ruhango group says GER-Rwanda started by



sensitizing him about what he does to today, he could not realize what it really meant he told the audience.

He says since 2017 we started small, and we continued participating in various trainings, organized by GER-Rwanda, but now we have expanded to a community learning centre, where others come to learn from us about entrepreneurship which in the end improves unity.

We currently work with some of the people who had a role in Genocide against the Tutsi, Genocide survivors, the youth that were born after the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi, where we all jointly work together for a common goal, with GER-Rwanda sponsoring us, without discrimination.



Youth were interested in sharing experience of what they do in their respective communities

On his part, Gakwaya Jean Pierre, Gasabo District representative commended GER-Rwanda for a strong partnership enjoyed for such a long time of five years in contributing to reconciliation and unity among Rwandans who were torn apart due to bad history. He requested the youth to follow the strides already achieved in promoting and observing the unity of Rwandans.

"Dear Youth, the task ahead is simple, it is to continue in the foot-steps of our elders, the heroes of our time. The President of the Republic of Rwanda, who always reminds us on how to live a Purposeful life, let us learn how to prevent ourselves from any adversary from outside or a watch among us" He observed that we need to remain alert of our enemies either from outside; colonizers who sowed the seeds of hatred among Rwandans and they are still actively affecting our governance or those who have continued to propagate hatred within our communities by inculcating bad ideologies among Rwandans.



Group photos of youth group leaders with invited guests by GER Rwanda.

The dialogue provided a platform for sharing positive testimonies of various individuals who showed a strong milestone taken to heal from the wounds sustained from the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi, reconcile and live harmoniously with each other in families and the entire Rwandan community, despite of hard times experienced by Rwandans before and during the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi.

Notably, the youth leaders pledged to create sensitization clubs in their schools and communities meant to change their peers for the betterment of their country. They further vowed to interact with the elders in their communities and offer orientation in line with transformative leadership geared to fighting genocide ideology in families and neighbourhood as well.

The youth more so pledged to use a church as a communication platform to convey reconciliation messages through, evangelism, poems and songs all of which will transmit the messages of hope to the masses.

Reconciliation within the community:

Throughout 100 days of commemoration of the 28 Genocide against the Tutsi, about 250 Youth participants in our program (**Beyond Conflicts Rwanda**) carry out reconciliation activities community level including home visit care, cleaning houses for survivors elders. The program is being implementing in 6 districts: Kicukiro, Gasabo, Bugesera, Rwamagana, Ruhango and Musanze.