

Experience of community facilitators of reconciliation trained by GER in Partnership with CFOR 2018



From June 16th 2018 to December 2018 GER and CFOR implemented activities to support reconciliations and healing trauma in Rwanda. These activities took place in three districts Kicukiro, Gasabo and Bugesera. These activities included forums and trainings of facilitators on the community level. These facilitators included Genocide survivors, perpetrators, and youth from both sides and also religious leaders.

We wish to present how this program is currently contributing to the process of unity and reconciliation, in healing themselves, and the initiative they take in their communities improving relations. It is seen from the testimonies of the facilitators and the feedback of local leaders plus different initiatives they created which help people on community level.

On 1st June 2019 I met Mr. Deo Munyemana and Rutabana Damascene population of Gasabo District. They participated in forums and have been trained as community facilitators. When we met, they shared experience they gained from the forums and training as well. The lessons they acquired include the module on the dynamics of trauma and how it can be healed.

They discussed and helped each other on the full comprehension of reconciliation and healing trauma. They said that the lessons acquired help them first of all to care for themselves, because they also have a connection with the history. They also learnt the way to provide a platform for the others, and invite people to talk; “In my community I used the knowledge from training on how to facilitate, then I invited perpetrators and survivors to talk about the issues of damaged properties during the 1994 genocide against Tutsi. And the practice was productive and effective, because people interacted over these issues and agreed on the solution, as some started paying properties they damaged.” Said Mr. Deo Munyemana.

We asked one of Genocide survivors who participated in these talks, he said that they appreciated the initiative because it made them free to talk their issues, “Perpetrators are now able to approach us freely so that we can solve these problems, personally they have paid me back my damaged resources during 1994 Genocide against Tutsi.” He said that the initiative is very productive and wish it can be spread countrywide “we are all Rwandans, we must live together no matter what.” He said.

One local leader from the community in which Mr. Deo Munyemana carried out these practices said that they appreciated how these practices work, and said that “if there were many trainees they would give a big contribution to solve these issues of damaged products in our communities, and I recommend that they must be scaled up in the whole country.”

Deo Munyemana is usually part of the committee of Rutunga Sector of Gasabo District; he started a good initiative of sharing experience with his colleague leaders, whereby he asked leaders to talk to the initiative of reconciliation and finally they put it on their calendar. By that Munyemana was awarded by the District for his initiative of reconciliation in his community.

Rutabana Damascene is also one of the trainees and participated in the forums, he is also a Genocide survivor. He said that before training and forums by GER and CFOR, to him it seemed impossible and difficult that perpetrators and survivors can come together, because there was suspicion and mistrust between them due to the historical wounds of the 1994 Genocide against Tutsi. But now they invite people to talk, whereby perpetrators and survivals meet to discuss unity and reconciliation, and these talks include the new generation (youth). Because of that, Damascene is invited often to help and give testimonies about reconciliation in different communities.

Uwumukiza Diedone and Mukandanga Beatrice are other trainees and they attended forums of GER and CFOR. I visited them in their community in Gasabo District on 6th June 2019. I was very grateful for how the training helped them as they shared with me through the interaction and discussions on the dynamics of trauma. They shared the experience and lesson from training and how they are using it in their community.

Mukandanga Beatrice who is a survivor said that the lesson from training helped her to care for herself and care for the others as well. “I use the knowledge from the training to care for myself and then care for other survivals by listening to them and inviting them to talk on my community level.” She emphasized that she learnt how to listen to people and show them that you feel their problems; she puts herself in the position of them so that she can feel their problems. Before the training she thought that hiding their emotions and not speaking would help her, but now she learnt that speaking out their emotions is the best way of healing. “I am proud of the step I made, and now I am helping my fellow survivors to reconcile and live together with perpetrators to improve relations.” She said.

“From the training, I learnt to address sensitive topics like the issues of trauma and genocide; and learnt the skills to handle hotspots moments, I really thank our facilitators for this training.” Said Mukandanga Beatrice.

Uwumukiza Dieudonne said that the skills he learnt from the training helped him to organise and lead community talks in his community during the commemoration of Genocide of 1994 against Tutsi. He also initiated youth talks on his community. “I used the skills to invite young girls who were affected by early pregnancy who were discriminated, I help them to talk their issues and reunite them with their families.” This initiative of Dieudonne is productive because some of the girls were brought back in their families and went back to school to finish their interrupted studies. “I also work with local leaders so that they can help these teenage mothers and their kids in their respective communities.” Dieudonne Said. “I am glad for the knowledge, skills and expertise I got from the training, and I am grateful to our facilitators.”

On 20th June 2019, I met with Safari Desire, Haragirimana Donatien, Kazanywenimana Rosine and Ndayisenga Aron who are trainees and attended all the forums by GER and CFOR. The trainees have set up their own plan to meet on a monthly basis and share experience and how they are using skills they got in their communities and discuss about challenges they meet.

They shared with me on their experience about the dynamics of trauma and how to manage it. They say that the lesson they learnt from the training is helping them to care for themselves and care for the others which is the lesson most of the trainees have reflected on severally.

“When I am leading talks I remember some of techniques that I learnt from our facilitators, like pen spinning to select who can speak, listening attentively, giving people time to talk etc. I apply the skills in our youth communities and churches including both survivors and perpetrators, and young people who were born from rape.” Haragirimana Donatien.

Kazanywenimana Rosine said that she used the energy and courage she got from the training to initiate talks with youth from the families of perpetrators in order to discuss unity and reconciliation. “This initiative encourages young people from families of perpetrators to discuss with their parents, and encourage them to speak the truth of the history, as it helps them to overcome the shame of what their parents did.” These groups of youth also encourage their parents to approach survivor’s families to improve relations so that they will inherit a good country free of discrimination. “It is not easy, but I keep trying so that this initiative will make a big change, I thank Mr. Desire my teammate, who always encourages me.” Rosine Said. She said that youth from perpetrators appreciated the initiative, and mentioned that these talks are needed to build their bright future.



I met with Mutware Antoine and Uwase Pauline residents of Bugesera District. I met them on 23rd June 2019. They are trainees and attended all forums.

We exchanged according to their understanding skills and what they learnt from the training, as well as the initiatives they started supporting reconciliation processes on community level.

Mutware Antoine and Uwase Pauline said that they learnt a lot from Arlene and JC, training facilitators, especially the way they focused at the person who is giving the testimonies or experience. Mutware Antoine said “I learnt that focusing and giving attention to the person who is telling his/her story allows them to speak out their painful stories and emotions.

“I used skills learnt from our facilitators to solve conflicts between parents and children. In my school there are families which live with conflicts and it affects their children who are our students. I invited parents and their children to talk, they addressed their issues and their problem was solved as these families reconciled.” Mutware Said. He also invites teachers and share experience with them how to treat a child with conflicts problems because they teach children whose background is related to Genocide. Mutware recommends that there should be training for teachers because they meet with young generations.

Pauline said that from the training she learnt that approaching people and touching them is a good way of feeling their moments and feelings. “I used the practices of approaching and touching people, during the talks that invite the survivors, perpetrators and children from perpetrators families.” She also initiated discussions with young people from survivors’

families to overcome the challenge they face due to the history of Genocide. Participants of these talks appreciate the initiative and need more interactive discussions.



Karangwa Gergoire, Mukantabana Rachel, Uwajeneza Dorcas and Mukarulinda Alice, are trainees who live in Bugesera District. I met them on 24th June 2019. They appreciated the skills they got from training and they started sharing it with communities.

The particularity of this group is that it contains a perpetrator and three survivors. Mukarulinda Alice said that having both perpetrators and survivors working together to find solutions on the existing challenges related to the effects of Genocide is contributing to the process of Reconciliation.

The lesson learnt from the trainings is that it helps them to care for themselves and care for the others too, listening to people and inviting people to talk. Uwajeneza Dorcas said that she invites survivors in their village and talk, even if I am a survivor; I know how to behave based on the skills got from the training, I listen to them carefully and let them talk their stories, mostly because the children they meet were born after the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi, and some others were very young during the Genocide.

“Before joining the training and forums I could not be able to share my story, but now I share my stories and invite others to talk, what impresses me is that I am giving my contribution to build my country; as youth there is a hope that what happened will never happen again and we

have good leadership.” Said Dorcas. I met with this team in Kicukiro on 27th June 2019; it is composed by Esperance Rukundo, Kamayirese Carine, and Muteteri Francine.

This group is particularly working with elders survivors. They meet them down in their households and interact with them, listen to them and help them in hygienic activities as some are too old to help themselves alone. These elders appreciate this initiative to meet them and invite them tell their stories. The group is thankful for Innocent Musore who support them financially, in their transport and other small domestic needs of elders.

This was initiated by Rukundo Esperance after the training, and when she shared it with Carine and Francine, they started conducting the field visit. “I thank Carine for her experience and commitment to help elders survivors. The skills we got from the training is a resource that we will use in helping others.” Esperance said.

“After participating in the training and forums, I invited women whose husbands are in prison because of the Genocide, and genocide survivor widows, we meet and talk on the existing issues and finding a way to help children build their bright future, because we do not want to leave our children in ethnical divisions and ethnicity background, we need that our children to help building their brighter future, as we have good leadership that helps our children from both survivors and perpetrators.” Kamayirese Carine said.

After meeting with trainees and local leaders, I appreciate the initiative of the trainees in their respective communities, where they contribute to the process of Peace building and Reconciliation at community level.

I also appreciated the initiative of inviting people to talk their painful stories and finding the common solution for the existing effects of the 1994 Genocide against Tutsi. I appreciated the initiative of economic activities by both survivors and perpetrators which are helping them in their real life. Finally, I appreciate changes that are happening in communities, whereby reconciliation is having a good progress, and I am happy for the contribution we are giving through these trainees.

My Personal opinion is that the training has been successful and trainees are using the skills they have, even though they are limited but they are contributing on personal change, improve relations and for the next generation is benefiting to know the truth of the Genocide to build the Rwanda we want.

I am committed to support community initiatives and I recommend these should be documented by various people including academia, researchers, partners, policy makers. So, I believe that it can be used elsewhere to support post-conflict communities all over the world.

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