

RWANDA A BEACON OF HOPE- SOMALIA WOMEN PEACE BUILDERS

The Somalia Women Peace makers have described Rwanda as a beacon of hope after the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi that led to the death of over a Million Tutsi population. A delegation of seventeen Somalia women Peace makers arrived in the country to share experience about Unity and Reconciliation in Rwanda from 9th - 10th Dec, 2024 at Villa Portofino Hotel in Kigali. GER-Rwanda shared its experience of facilitating community Reconciliation activities.



The Executive Director of GER Rwanda, Mr. Musore Innocent(Forefront) in a company of Somalia Women Peace Builders at Villa Portofina in Kigali –Rwanda from 9th – 10th December 2024

In his opening remarks, The Executive Director of GER Rwanda Mr. Innocent Musore lauded the Somalia delegation for coming to share and learn from each other for the sake of exchanging knowledge and experiences. A two -day workshop which was organized by the Berghof Foundation helped the Somalis to learn from Rwanda’s experience in reconciliation and peacebuilding. “We have what it takes. You can learn from resilience of Rwandans especially the approach that **GER** uses in its activities”, said Musore.

Notably, the workshop provided a platform for participants to learn from various experts who were involved in Rwanda’s history, peacebuilding, reconciliation, and resilience that can be extended to Somalia’s context. Additionally, the workshop aimed at bringing together Somali peacebuilders to collaborate towards a future where ethnic division, hatred, and prejudice no longer exist in the society, renewing their commitment to building a more inclusive and harmonious country for all citizens.

For his part **Mr. Gerard Nyirimanzi**, an advisor to GER and an expert in history, security, and peacebuilding, conveyed a powerful lecture on Rwanda's history. He talked about Rwanda's journey from pre-colonization, through the Genocide, and to the post-Genocide recovery. He tackled the role colonization played in inculcating ethnic discrimination and hatred, which ultimately led to the 1994 Genocide. Gerard also highlighted the causes of the Genocide, the factors that led people to believe they were different, and the process of reconciliation, including the vital role played by the Rwandan Patriotic Front and the Gacaca courts, which provided decent justice to the nation. On the final day of the workshop, participants expressed interest in learning about GER-Rwanda's successful stories by bringing together Genocide survivors, perpetrators, and other individuals affected by the Genocide

Furthermore, the Mr. **Innocent Musore of GER-Rwanda**, shared about the vision to support reconciliation, and the activities that support reconciliation forums, training of community facilitators, facilitate interactions (Community dialogues). He observed that the initiative has contributed to reconciliation and improved relations among Rwandans, dealing with the effects of genocide including; collective trauma and stigma and discrimination. He also highlighted some projects implemented in partnership with CFOR and National Unity and Reconciliation Commission NURC. He said the aim was to heal the past and facilitating the future and enhancing community's capacity and resilience to prevent the future violent conflicts in Rwanda.

Mr. Musore further shared the experience of bringing together two parties with such deep divisions: "When you work on emotional trauma, it's possible to reconcile. It's not only about the physical wounds that need healing. Many people we work with, from both sides, are burdened with emotional trauma, and we had to start there."

Healing the Past and Creating the Future: The women stressed the importance of forgiveness and apology in the healing process, noting that healing begins within oneself. **Women in Climate and Environmental Peacebuilding.** The women discussed forming associations to create safe spaces for women to discuss the issues they face and support one another. They also advocated for increased women's representation in government positions and the support of community-led initiatives to help women develop and empower themselves.

The workshop was a valuable experience, as GER-Rwanda not only shared its work, success stories, and ongoing progress but also learned from the Somali women and the Berghof Foundation. The exchange of knowledge and insights provided a platform for strengthening the peacebuilding efforts of both countries. Rwanda has become a model of hope and resilience, with its successful efforts to heal and reconcile after the Genocide against the Tutsi, despite the painful scars of the past. According to the United Nations Development Program, Rwanda's journey of healing has inspired many countries by proving that, no matter how deep the wounds, reconciliation and forgiveness are achievable.

Breaking the Silence, the women expressed the need to make their voices heard in Somalia by pushing for laws that protect them when they speak out. They also advocated for policies that allow women to have a say in family decisions. Community-led dialogues were seen as a means to unite people and reduce atrocities. They also emphasized the need to incorporate peace education into the school system to address the root causes of violence. "When illiteracy increases, violence increases," said one of the women peacebuilders from Somalia.

GER's mission is to support the peacebuilding process and improving livelihood through ecosystem conservation in Rwanda and Beyond with focus in post conflicts countries. Women from Somali observed that Rwanda has achieved a lot as results of visionary leadership and good governance after the Genocide against the Tutsi where more than one million killed in the period of 100 days.