About Never Again Rwanda
A peace building and social justice organization that arose in response to the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi. Guided by a vision of a society that enjoys sustainable peace, development and social justice.”

EDITORIAL | 2019 Update:
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FEATURE | Umuganda Activity
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FEATURE | 2019 Regional PBI:
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Dr. Joseph Nkurunziza Ryarasa
Executive Director, Never Again Rwanda

Our first issue in the year 2019 has come during the time when Rwandans and friends to Rwanda all over the world are commemorating the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi for the 25th time. As an organization that was founded to respond to its consequences in 2002, this period not only reminds us of the shock that left over one millions lives claimed, but also the fact that its consequences still linger on, especially among a fraction of the generation that is yet to be healed from the traumatic ordeal during the dark 100 days.

Through our interventions that are all geared towards genocide prevention and building to lasting peace, we work with young people, who hold the torch for future generations. We equip the youth with the knowledge about Rwanda’s bitter history, the deconstruction of stereotypes & prejudices and also equip them with critical thinking skills. Our work with youth has indicated that some of the youth suffer intergenerational trauma, transmitted from their parents and/or relatives. So, as we facilitate the older generation on their journey to healing, we also bring the youth along.

As we continue Kwibuka 25 period, we urge for more efforts to preserve the memory of our history, the healing needed and be reminded of the hope and light that radiates in Rwanda today because we choose to “Kwibuka, Twiyubaka”

Feedback

Feedback is important to our work. If you have any message, question or comment about any story in here or even about our work, please write to us on info@neveragainrwanda.org or imulekatete@neveragainrwanda.org
Mutesi (not real name) was a young and energetic 13 year old teenager, who was studying at school and with a bright future ahead of her, when the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi happened. She unfortunately lost both her parents and her four older siblings. After the Genocide, she was connected to her maternal auntie, with whom she started to stay with. As bad luck would have it, her auntie’s husband raped her; she got pregnant and contracted the HIV/AIDS virus, which exacerbated her situation. When the auntie got to know about it, she expelled Mutesi from her home and she was left to hassle solely. Well, she moved from one place to another in search for shelter and a meal to survive the next day. Fast forward, she gave birth and only a few months down the road, she was pregnant again. Mutesi was now a bitter mother of two and one with no hope. In 2015 when NAR started the societal healing and participatory governance program, Mutesi was one of the participants and she went through 4 years of psychosocial support.

Recently she reached out to us and she told us how she was able to pick up her pieces, embraced her life and became more hopeful. She enrolled for a technical course and she is optimistic of what the life has in store for her.

Mutesi had lost the sparkle in her eyes and she had lost hope of fulfilling the dream she once had of becoming a successful woman in whatever sphere. Helping people like Mutesi is one of the priorities of Never Again Rwanda and such success stories are the reason we keep holding on to our mission “Empower communities for Peace and Social Justice”.

About Psychosocial support group approach

This is a process that enables individuals and communities to heal from psychological wounds that resulted/result from past/present experiences with the aim of restoring broken relationships, returning hope and increasing empathy, aspects that are pivotal for peaceful coexistence among communities. The group component brings together individuals from diverse backgrounds as well as individuals with similar wounds to share their wounding experiences in order for them to begin a healing journey.

NAR opted to use this approach since it was found to be the most appropriate strategy for healing in the Rwandan context, due to the fact that the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi left widespread wounds among the Rwandan population. Through this approach, NAR formed spaces of peace comprised of 30 members, drawn from one community. The group and community approaches enabled NAR to reach out to a greater number of participants who later on build relationships and continue to come together through various acts of solidarity even after healing spaces have phased out.

This approach has had a multiplier effect, not only among those who were part of the spaces; rather also impacted their families and surrounding community. Through this program, participants were also able to gain a sense of belonging (most especially for those who were isolated by their families or lost their families), empathy, confidence, understanding that wounds are cross cutting across the entire Rwandan population and most importantly hope for the future. The implementation of this societal healing intervention specifically psychosocial support group approach served as a means to raise awareness of the need to establish and strengthen existing healing initiatives.
We were honored to join Kicukiro District residents for the monthly Umuganda activity at Nyanza Genocide Memorial site. It was attended by The President of the Republic of Rwanda, H.E Paul Kagame, EAC Ministers and Heads of Organs & Institutions in Rwanda among various other officials from different organizations. NAR staff and members from youth affiliated clubs and associations attended the activity as part of the various pre-conference activities, which have been organized by NAR in preparation for the 8th annual youth conference on commemoration policy and practice of the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi, slated for April 18th 2019.

Carol Allen-Storey, an award winning photojournalist based in the UK but currently working with NAR during the commemoration period, attended the Umuganda. As she reflected on the day’s events, she said: “On a very personal basis I found the Umuganda event uplifting, inspirational and joyful. The coming together of Kigali’s citizens to work together ... their jubilance, the joy I witnessed on their faces as they worked together nourished my soul. Everyone was smiling, everyone supporting one another. The atmosphere was electrifying. Unquestionably, The President, H.E Paul Kagame’s participation and his charismatic short speech was a powerful example to global leaders on how to unite and inspire a nation that was divided with vision and humble engagement.”
Women are the most affected by conflict yet remain under represented and unrecognized for their efforts and successes in peace processes. Women’s meaningful participation in formal peace processes goes beyond representation, it means ensuring that their multifarious interests are fully reflected and met to promote sustainable peace.

On 8th March, the world celebrated the International Women’s Day, under the campaign theme #BalanceforBetter, a call to action to achieve gender balance. This served as a reminder that women deserve a seat at the negotiation table to ensure that their needs are met and supported.

Through various platforms and programs, NAR works to ensure that women have a place in conversations on peacebuilding, social justice and more; 

- In 2017, the Peace-Building Institute incorporated a new theme on “Women, Peace and Security” to address the specific role of women in peacebuilding efforts.
- NAR’s Societal Healing for Participatory Governance program has specifically addressed the unique experiences of women including those who are facing stigmatization or Gender Based Violence.
- Through its citizen forums, NAR raises awareness about the prejudices and traditional ideas about gender roles.

This is the first step in empowering women to actively participate in decision-making in their communities and deliberately engage in mediation, decision-making and other peace processes. Leaving women out of decision-making processes means we are missing out on half of the perspective and half of the ideas that could go a long way in promoting and attaining long-lasting and sustainable peace.

International Women’s Day
Balance for Better

We are living in a paradoxical time; despite the world being more accepting of diversity than ever before, society seems to be more divided. Whether its differences in race, religion, social class or politics today’s problems can be linked in one way or another to systemic social injustice and widespread discrimination. It is these factors that have driven the emphasis on inclusivity, diversity, fairness, partnership, accountability and justice. Nurturing a peaceful and inclusive world means considering these key principles, the principles of social justice.

On February 20th, the World Day of Social Justice was celebrated in a bid to recognize and uphold the principles of peaceful and prosperous coexistence within and among nations. Upholding these principles means fostering non-discriminatory and unbiased relations between individuals and society thus creating a fair world.

NAR believes that true social justice begins with celebrating diversity in our communities. From its founding, NAR has promoted the inclusion of diverse groups including youth and citizens to express their views on democratic values and take up leadership roles in greater political spaces. Peaceful dialogue and proper establishment of safe spaces allows NAR and partners to engage citizens to live empowered lives, celebrate diversity and the power of inclusive peace values. This is crucial because if we do not acknowledge or celebrate our differences, it can lead to resentment, hostility and eventually conflict. We need equity, diversity and a supportive environment to effectively catalyze peace.
The 2019 Regional PBI welcomed a warm, outgoing and diverse group of 16 youth representing nine African nations. This PBI was especially unique and exciting as the team was able to invite the first participant representing the Horn of Africa and the first participant living with a disability to attend the Institute. With these new experiences, the team is further committed to continue to promote diversity and equal representation of marginalized groups.

As the Assistant Peace-Building Institute Coordinator and as a PBI alumna myself, the two week Regional PBI was one of the most rewarding and electrifying experiences in my career. I was in awe of a brilliant group of young participants. They came to the PBI well-prepared with unending curiosity, challenging questions and a plethora of ideas to take back to their home communities. Upon arrival, participants noted that they expected to learn more about Rwanda’s past history, how to transform conflict and to create a larger professional network with young people from the region. As they departed, several participants stated that the PBI far exceeded their expectation. Participants from Kenya and South Sudan pointed out that they feel a new inspiration and motivation to deconstruct stereotypes and examine how their own behaviors and words can affect peace and conflict in their communities. Female participants from Sudan and Djibouti noted that before the PBI they didn’t realize that women and youth had such a large and well-defined position in peacebuilding globally. After seeing some of the international declarations and resolutions, these two young women shared that they felt newly committed to ensuring female and youth participation in spaces for peacebuilding and dialogue.

Being a part of the PBI team has taught me that regardless of our past trauma, experience or knowledge there are always lessons to learn, new perspectives to be taken and opportunities to heal. Along with my colleagues and the entire PBI team, I look forward to watching the PBI expand and meeting more spirited and determined peacebuilders from around the globe.

By: Hannah Wood - Assistant PBI Coordinator.

Great Lakes Peacebuilding Program

Never Again Rwanda promotes for lasting peace beyond the boundaries of Rwanda. These efforts are embedded in the Great Lakes Peacebuilding Program, which is often implemented in a mixed context of several upheavals at the levels of the regional diplomacy, integration, security and democratic processes. Despite that, the program has been able to register some successes:

- Strengthening cross-border communities’ resilience against the checks from recurrent crisis and conflicts with regional ramifications
- Deconstruction of prejudices and strengthening the attitude of empathy and solidarity among border population
- Promising cross-border cooperation, through a mechanism for regular communication between the political leaders from Rusizi District and the Province of South-Kivu in DRC

The program has directly reached out to 2,225 persons (1,220 males and 1,005 females), among them; 195 decision makers, 1,916 community members and 114 peacebuilding partners [CSOs and religious leaders], with 1,594 Rwandans, 111 Burundians, and 474 Congolese. This program is implemented in partnership with Interpeace and other regional partners like CENAP (Burundi), Pole Institute, CEJA, APC & RIO (DRC).
Major challenges youth are facing:

Transgenerational trauma, Poor quality of education, Poverty, Identity Crisis, Ethnic ideology

Disclaimer: The views expressed here are of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of Never Again Rwanda or their partner organizations.
Peace Insight

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