

# PeaceInsight

Never Again Rwanda Newsletter

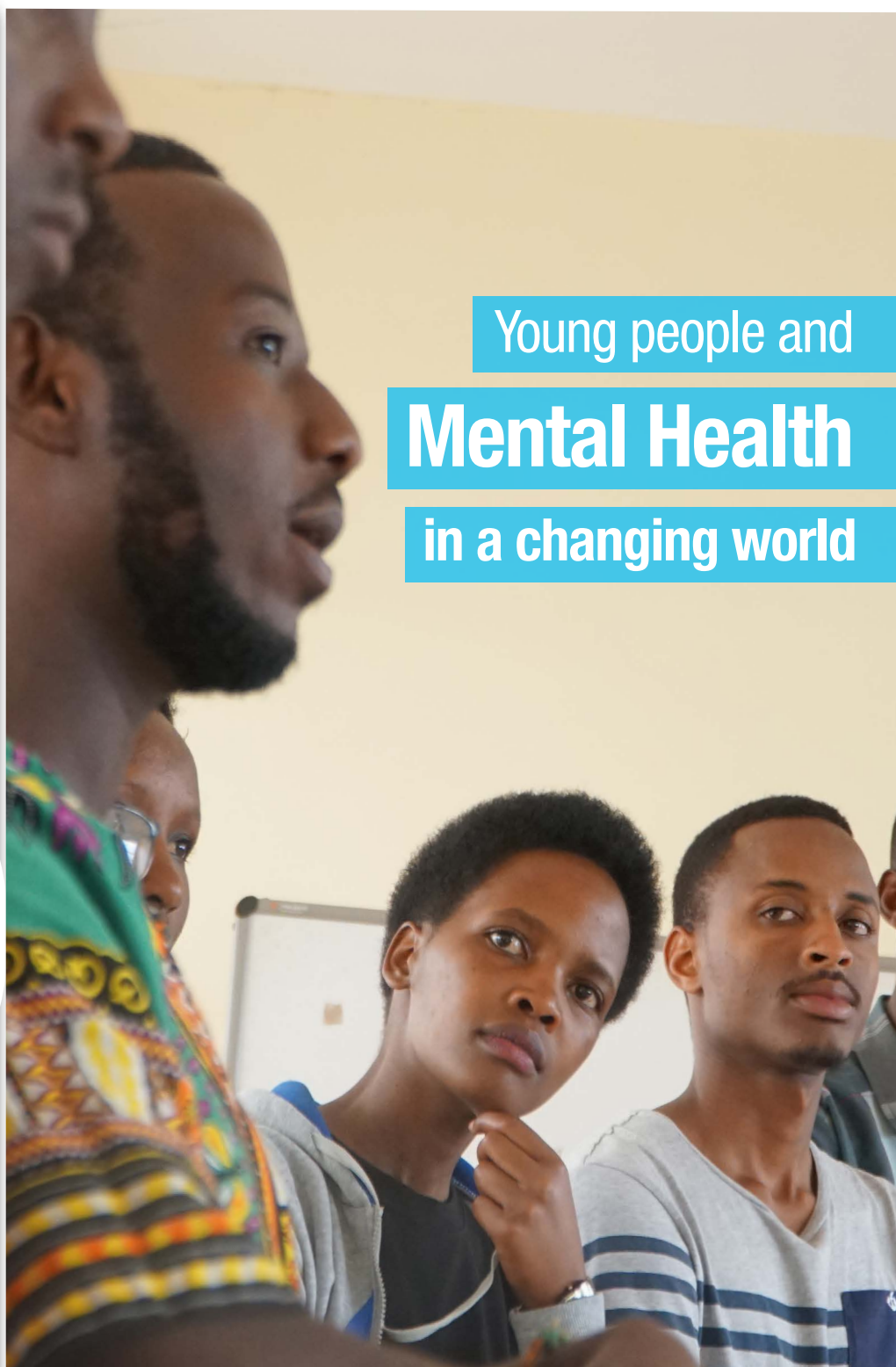
## About Never Again

A peace building and social justice organization that arose in response to the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi. Guided by a vision of a nation where citizens are agents of positive change and work together towards sustainable peace.

- 2** **OP-ED | Young People and Mental Health:** Adelite Mukamana highlights the need to increase emphasis on the mental health of youth.
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- 4** **Q&A | Rurangwa Umulisa Nelly:** Peace Insight's Sanny Aline sat down with Nelly to discuss her work in educating youth on mental health.

*never*  
again

– Rwanda –



## Young people and Mental Health in a changing world

**Training on Critical-Thinking and Decision-Making:** Participants of the critical-thinking training listen to each other as they share their different thought processes when it comes to decision-making.

# 'To demand more from the youth, Mental Health must be our focus'



By Adelite Mukamana

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### Disclaimer:

The views expressed here are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect those of Never Again Rwanda or their partner organisations.

Every 10th of October, world mental health day is observed, a day that provides an opportunity to identify what needs to be done to make mental health care a reality for all people. The day that was celebrated this year for the 26th time since 1992, showed that there is still limited mental health education, awareness campaigns or even advocacy against this social stigma.

This year's world mental health day was observed under the theme: "Young people and Mental Health in a Changing World" which reflects the importance to shift the focus to youth especially since the number of youth affected by mental distress is rising. According to a 2014 World Health Organization (WHO) report, every 40 seconds somebody somewhere in the world dies by suicide, which is said to be the second leading cause of death in young people, aged 15 to 29. Suicide was often shrouded as a taboo, but it is one of the evidences that as the world evolves, people's mental health is further disturbed.

Although a lot of progress has been registered in various spheres, Rwanda is still recovering from the mass killings that deeply shattered communities. From being lone survivors in their entire families, to witnessing brutal murders of loved ones, hiding in dark places for over 3 months, to looking at the blood that was flowing their streets, many Rwandans were left with wounds and psychological trauma that left many dented with permanent mental distress. The effect seems to also be affecting the young generation, most of whom never witnessed the genocide - but transmitted through intergenerational trauma.

In Rwanda, a study conducted by the Ministry of Youth and ICT in collaboration with Kigali Health Institute in 2011 showed that 52.5% of the youth between 14 and 35 of age had consumed one or more substances at least once in their life time. 1 in 13 young people in Rwanda [7.46 %] are alcohol

dependent, 1 in 20 [4.88%] have suffered from nicotine dependence, while 1 in 40 young people [2.54%] are cannabis dependent. In addition, a study on Violence Against Children and Youth [VACYS] conducted in Rwanda; 2015-2016 on children and youth aged 13 to 24 years found that sexual, physical and emotional violence against children and youth is a serious concern. Before the age of 18, around 1 in 5 females and 1 in 10 males in Rwanda have been exposed to sexual violence, and about 1 in 10 females and 2 in 10 males have faced emotional violence. All cases from inter-generational trauma, drug abuse and gender based violence not only present a dire situation of mental disorder, rather also highlights the need for mental health care for all.

Never Again Rwanda, whose mission is to contribute to a sustainable peaceful society; through its societal healing program, conducted a baseline [2014] and an end line [2018] survey. Based on one of the components [Psychological Distress and Resilience] of the end line results, the sample respondents from our spaces for peace indicated that there was a 66% decline in thoughts of suicide [reduced from 15%-5%]; 50% decrease in people who reported depression [reduced from 44.5%-23.4%], 35% decrease in Post Traumatic Distress and 25% overall improvement in psychological resilience [33% increase among women]. The commendable change can be attributed to varied reasons: from government programs, to time but mostly to dialogue.

If a traumatized person is supported through safe spaces where they can talk and express their concerns and wounds, they can heal from mental problems with time. As per NAR's experiences, the world mental health day presents an opportunity to open the dialogue on people's personal and historical issues that could be detrimental to their mental health, but also openly talking about the need for mental health care. **PI**

## VOX POPS:

# Young people on Mental Health



“ Gisele Rugwiro  
Mental Health Activist

I have noticed young people battle with mental illness that is mostly triggered by human rights violations, wars, violence at home, schools and work. Some commit suicide as a result or end up in substance abuse and to make it worse, there's little to no knowledge about mental illness and wellbeing being taught in our communities. The mental health of young people is as important as their physical health because it allows them to develop the resilience to cope with anything life throws at them. This is why it's important and essential that our communities have support centers and services that are equipped to promote wellbeing, managing mental illness, and most importantly, identify early signs of mental illness in order to prevent young people from reaching a mental health crisis in the first place.



“ Jessica Mbanda  
Peacebuilding Officer

Depression is like drowning, except everyone around you is breathing.

Depression is the feeling you've lost something but having no clue what it is until one day you realize what you lost is yourself.

Depression is exhausting; especially when you're pretending not to have it. It's a constant feeling of being numb.

Being numb to emotions and numb to life. It is darkness 24/7, a feeling beyond sadness.

Dear young people, your pain and anxiety make sense. It's not in your head. We are living in a world that doesn't meet our basic needs for connection, for meaning, for purpose, for a sense of the future.



“ Peter Ndahiro  
Communications Officer

The youth are seen to have had it better than previous generations. However, great opportunities bring enormous pressure to succeed, and over-bearing fear of failure. Your lack of peace of mind develops into a continuous voice of self-doubt. Confidence in one's ability and achievement is gradually broken down when the standards never seem high enough. Eventually, young, and hungry minds become suffocated into recluse as the weight of your achievement becomes more important than your own well-being.

Sinking into such a sadness makes one incapable of fulfilling their potential. We must pay more attention to the mental wellness of our young people if we truly want them to be the best that they can be.



“ Joseph Kalisa  
Mental Health Practitioner

Watching news, scrolling through the internet or talking to family and friends around us, it's evident that constant stressors and challenges are eminently facing young peoples' lives and the world around them. Early pregnancies, cyber bullying, depression among other major mental illnesses seem to be "The new normal." Studies have shown in particular that children who are neglected or physically or psychologically abused are more likely to engage sex at an early age and hence explaining the link between mental illnesses and teenage pregnancies. The question now is "how can we create an environment that promotes good mental health for young people?" as we seek solutions to these challenges.

## MENTAL HEALTH AND THE YOUTH

# 18%

of patients received by mental health departments during the 23rd Commemoration were between ages 14 - 21.  
NAR's Commemoration Conference 2018

# 50%

of all mental illnesses begin by the age of 14, but most cases go undetected and untreated.

source: <https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk>

# 70%

of children and adolescents with mental health problems have not had appropriate interventions at a sufficiently early age.

source: <https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk>

## MENTAL HEALTH:

# Q&A

Nelly in conversation with Peace Insight's Sanny Aline on her work in Mental Health Education.

## Umulisa Nelly: Educating the Youth on Mental Health

**Twenty-year-old Rurangwa Umulisa Nelly** is a 3rd year student at the University of Rwanda, pursuing a bachelor's degree in Clinical Psychology. She believes that life has a lot to do with what we think and the content of our mind, a belief that shapes her passion for mental health care and her current position as the President of the Clinical Psychology Students Association of Rwanda (CPSAR). She spoke to **Peace Insight's Sanny Aline Ntaganira** about her **perspectives on young people and mental health**.

### **Tell us about CPSAR and what you do to sensitize mental health among the young people**

CPSAR is all about raising mental health awareness. In our society, mental health still suffers high stigma and people do not easily open up about it. Thus, one of our goals is to tell people that it's okay not to be okay, and that seeking help or asking for help is one of the first steps to healing, if one is not doing well mentally. Some people confuse mental distress with severe psychiatric cases, where "mad people" throw stones and walk naked on the streets. Although mental health issues can be seemingly simple cases, like anxiety, extreme or outrageous behavior or even lack of sleep, they can be very detrimental on one's life. So, we encourage people to talk about their emotional distresses and we empower many to join our field, because our country is

unique - a post conflict nation, which poses high risks of mental disorders. In Rwanda, the level of PTSD is currently at 26.1% and statistics show that the young generation is very exposed to mental disorders. This is what prompts our call to more people to join our field so that we can join efforts and foster a healthy and mentally fit nation.

### **What inspired you to work in mental health care?**

There are three main things which inspired me to join mental health field, the first is my brother. I have a big brother who was born with Down Syndrome [Trisomie Ventalle]; it's a congenital mental disorder. Since we tend get to know things later in life [when we grow up], I looked at how he grew up, he was well cared for at home but he wasn't able to get the best education because of the limited resources available. As I looked at him, I felt determined

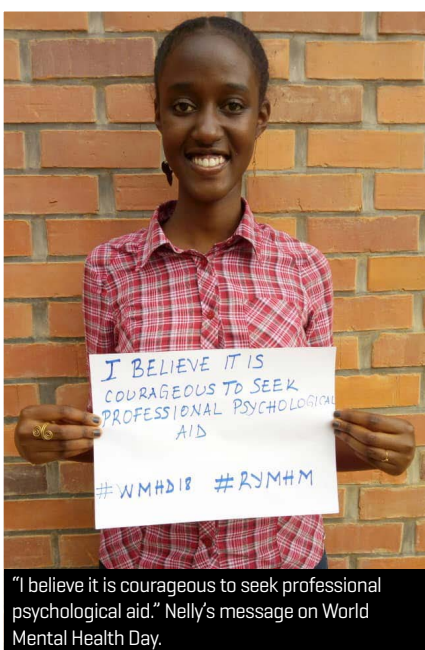
to join clinical psychology so that I can work with kids with special needs, so that I may have a chance to attend them. Secondly, young people are seen as incapable, though if they are well cared for, they have the potential to make pivotal contributions to their country. The third reason is the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi that left the social fabric broken. Although most people were and still are affected, if we nurture the young generation today, we can rebuild that fabric, for other generations to enjoy.

### **Is there anything you have noticed so far about young people and their general knowledge on mental health issues?**

Today, most of the young people live with mental distress, but they don't know it, but when you tell them about it, they tend to notice its importance. One day, before the



Nelly speaking to the audience during the 2018 International Day of Peace celebration which was observed under the national theme of 'Critical Thinking for Peace'.



"I believe it is courageous to seek professional psychological aid." Nelly's message on World Mental Health Day.

**“Today, most of the young people live with mental distress, but they don't know it, but when you tell them about it, they tend to notice its importance. I met a young man here at NAR and he was surprised to know that depression is also a problem in Rwanda, he used to think that it is not real.**

celebrations of the International Day of Peace, I met a young man here at NAR, and he asked me about what I study, and I told him that I am in clinical psychology, he was too curious to know what we do, a topic that I often love to talk about. After our conversation, he was surprised to know that depression is also a problem in Rwanda, because he used to think that it is not real.

**Are there any specific approaches you have been using to educate the young people about mental health?**

The approaches we use include; giving positive messages in school reach outs, and educating people [small focus groups] on the importance of taking care of their mental health explain that without it, whatever they are doing would be in vain, they get to know that if they want to live well, they have to be responsible of taking care of their mental health. Like resting is important after a long study period, as without resting at the end of the day what one studied would go to waste.

**How have you seen awareness about mental health amongst the youth develop over the years?**

The awareness of mental health is really progressing, most especially now that we are getting the support from government which is very important thing because without the

support of leaders we can't progress.

**Where do you see the link between mental health and peace building?**

Most of the time, when a child gets a crisis at school or in the community, it gives you an image of what is happening at home. Our parents are our models, they nurture us and they teach us how to maintain the social relations. So based on our history, they are instances when some children are warned by their parents not to talk to some people, or not to go to a neighbor's home, instilling a sense of fear that she/he could be poisoned. Such a child will have anxiety issue and prejudices, which can affect the peace building efforts because she/he will not be able to live in harmony with the family that he/she was warned against. This is why critical thinking skills are important among the young people, it provides an opportunity to question certain statements and are not easily manipulated in to any violence.

**How have you been able to involve girls in your work in mental health?**

The first launch of our work was in a girls' school and they are super motivated to know about mental health care. We often ensure that among girls are on the team of volunteers when we do community outreach. Also, as the president, I am a lady, which alone is a strong motivation to many girls.

**What plans do you have in the future for continuing to push the conversation and educating young people about mental health?**

Our future plans range from different things like; opening up more clubs in high schools, and raising the conversation in community meetings, because I realized that the way forward is to engage focus group discussions so as to spread the message among different people hence raise the awareness of mental health to a bigger audience. **PI**



Pictorial:

NAR joins Justice Sector for

# Umuganda



Citizens of Busasamana in Nyanza District participate in the special Umuganda.

Officials from the Justice Sector joined citizens in cultivating the land in Busasamana Nyanza District.

Umuganda has served as a space to enhance social cohesion among local residents; it reminds citizens of their civic duty to participate in community and national development.

During the special Umuganda, leaders of justice sector institutions and civil society organizations took the opportunity to raise awareness of human trafficking, drug trafficking and use, and cybercrimes. Community members also used the space to articulate their needs and express their opinions on various issues.

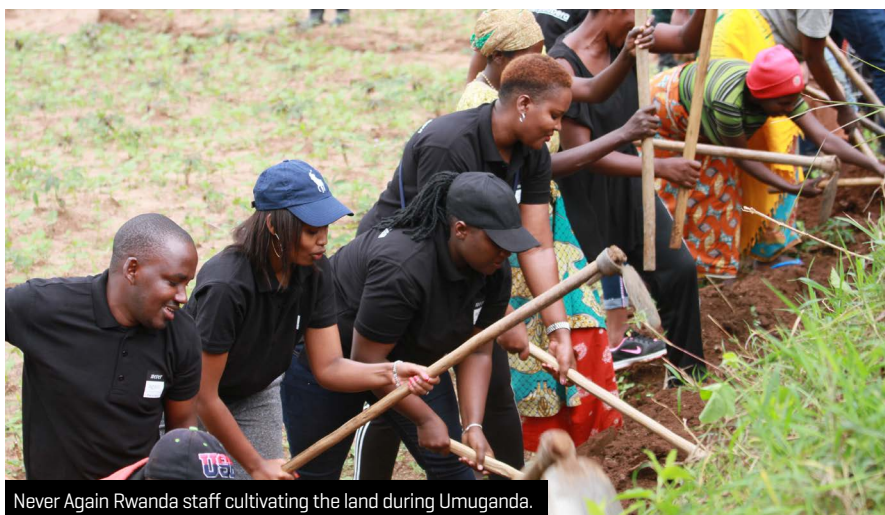
In his remarks, the Executive Director of Never Again Rwanda, Dr. Joseph Nkurunziza Ryarasa urged the participants to strengthen their unity, especially during Umuganda, by urging them to talk about issues of human rights and jointly seek solutions.

“Citizens ought to consider Umuganda as a tool for mutual assistance and social cohesion, but also an opportunity to strengthen unity, raise community issues of human rights and governance, while also envisioning potential solutions for these problems.”

Other dignitaries and officials called for collective effort in the fight against human security issues such as human trafficking, and cybercrimes. They pointed to the fact that speedy development has come up with its own security challenges and technology related issues. **PI**



Citizens sang during the special Umuganda to boost morale.



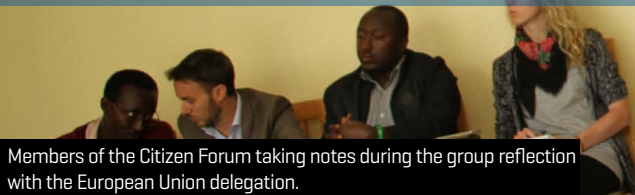
Never Again Rwanda staff cultivating the land during Umuganda.



Following the community work, officials from the Justice Sector engaged the citizens on community issues.

## GOVERNANCE:

# EU Delegation visits Citizen Forum



Members of the Citizen Forum taking notes during the group reflection with the European Union delegation.

The delegation from the European Union in October, visited a citizen forum in Rusatira sector, Huye District, while they convened their usual monthly meeting. The participants were discussing the issue of juvenile delinquency in the community, trying to jointly identify some of its root causes, its consequences on the youth and potential measures to lower these rates.

The meeting that seemed ordinary to the members, since they had been holding such kind of meetings for the last 4 years, was more of an emphasis of the EU's commitment to active citizen participation from the grassroots. The Head of the Economics, and Governance Section at the EU Delegation in Rwanda, Thibaut Moyer, reiterated the reason why EU supports projects that aim to enhance the debating ability of citizens.

*"We support projects that build the capacity of citizens to constructively debate community issues with their leaders and define their needs and priorities as a pillar of good governance and accountability".*

During the dialogue, Citizen Forum Members identified some lingering causes of juvenile delinquency such as parents' irresponsibility to take care of their children, school dropouts, and poverty as well as intra-family conflicts, an issue that was underscored as one of the main causes driving children out of their homes. The participants noted that juvenile delinquency lead to conflicts and insecurities, teenage pregnancies and destruction of infrastructure. As a mitigation measure, Jean Bosco Sibomana, a Citizen Forum member, called for the need to start the discussions on juvenile delinquency in the existing platforms such as umugoroba w'ababyeyi, inteko z'abaturage and umuganda.

**"We support projects that build the capacity of citizens to debate community issues with leaders and define their needs and priorities, as a pillar of good governance and accountability"**

- Thibaut Moyer  
Head of Section, Economics, & Governance, EU in Rwanda



Members of the Huye Citizen Forum follow the remarks from the European Union delegation

*"If the issue is discussed in these platforms that bring many community members together, it will not only raise awareness of its magnitude, but allow us to collectively seek shared solutions."*

The Head of Programs at Never Again Rwanda Eric Mahoro, urged Citizen Forum members to continue fostering a sense of ownership to community transformation and the positive contribution of young people to society.

More citizen forums will be launched in the 5 districts [Musanze, Nyagatare, Huye, Gasabo

and Rutsiro] where Never Again Rwanda [NAR] and Interpeace, supported by the European Union, will be implementing a project entitled: "Enhancing and reinforcing Rwandan citizen participation in existing local government consultations processes and platforms" which was launched mid-year. **PI**



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# The Declaration of Human Rights at 70

Lasting impact of declaration on peacebuilding efforts



By Mucyo Teddy Gatali

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Eleanor Roosevelt holding the Universal Declaration of Human Rights after being one of the key members of the drafting committee.

Almost 70 years ago, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on 10 December 1948 at Palais de Chaillot, Paris. The declaration, being the most translated document in the world, available in 500 languages, proclaimed the inalienable rights which everyone is inherently entitled to as a human being, a principle if meticulously adhered to, can improve peacebuilding efforts.

Human rights and peace-building represent two distinct approaches to the construction of a society where justice, security, and human dignity are fundamental principles. Both human rights and peace-building rely on effective institutions and a principled approach to individual and social life, and they also have a number of other aspects in common

Just like human rights cannot be respected in times of war and conflicts, also human rights violations can trigger violent conflicts. When the rights of an individual or a group are abused or aren't protected, it can give rise to

**“ Just like human rights cannot be respected in times of war and conflicts, also human rights violations can trigger violent conflicts. When the rights of an individual or a group are abused or aren't protected, it can give rise to violent conflicts which in turn lead to more human rights violations. ”**

violent conflicts which in turn lead to greater human rights violations.

In Rwanda's case, just like many post conflict societies, the promotion and protection of human rights not only rebuilds the society, but also augments reconciliation efforts by providing justice to victims and creating institutions that will protect the rights of all in society. Both human rights and Peace building practitioners combine efforts to try to assist societies in taking steps to ensure that the violence does not recur and that the rights of every human being are respected.

Although the UDHR itself is not legally binding, it has become the model of all 'bill of human rights' which are now found in most constitutions. As the world will be celebrating 70 years of its existence, the onus falls on us all to take action in our own daily lives, to uphold the rights that protect us all and thereby promote the kinship of all human beings, so we may promote peace building in our homes, schools, communities, countries and world at large. **PI**

## PEACEBUILDING:

# Turuhurane

## Space for Peace

### Attaining Tolerance and Self Worth through Safe Spaces:

**P**ost-Genocide Rwanda inherited various social wounds as a result of the genocide and effects of living in exile for some people who lived in the region and abroad as refugees. These events affected people both physically and psychologically. Some of the psychological wounds include loss of loved ones, transferred guilt of perpetrators to their family members, rape victims, stigmatisation of victims and ex-perpetrators, prejudices, and incomplete mourning among some victims. In order to contribute to the consolidation of peace in the Rwandan context, Never Again Rwanda in collaboration with Interpeace established a 4-year Societal Healing and Participatory governance for peace program in 2015.

The aim of healing was to support youth and community members from diverse

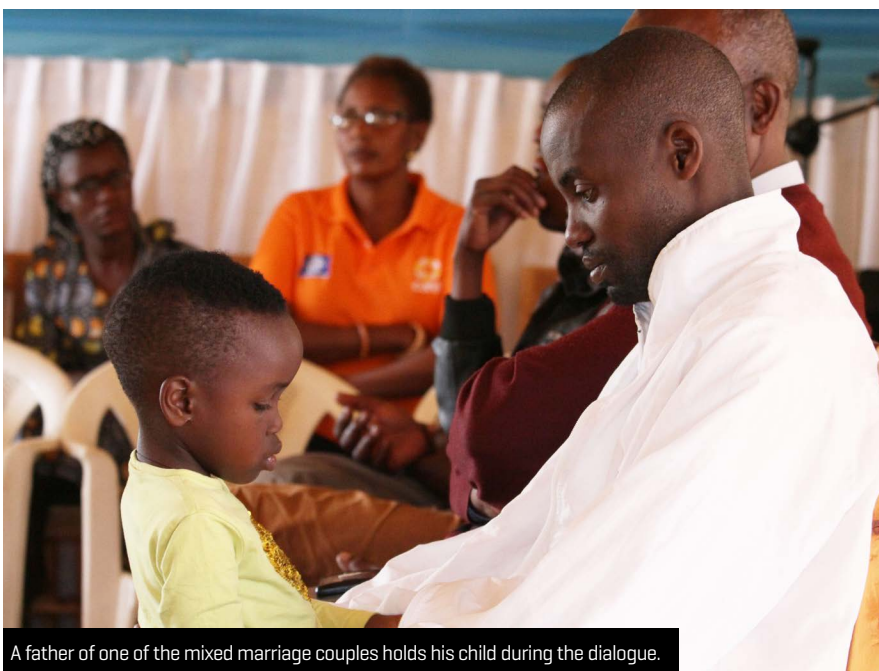
backgrounds to overcome their trauma through the creation of safe spaces. To inform the implementation of the program, country wide mapping of actors and approaches research was carried out, in a bid to understand appropriate approaches for healing and potential wounded groups that suited the program objectives. It also aimed to establish actors involved in healing and create

synergy among other actors. Through this research, the program team was guided to use psychosocial support group approach due to its relevancy to the Rwandan context, its capacity to support a large number of people and use few professionals. In total, 15 groups from diverse backgrounds were supported. For purposes of this article, I will only talk about how the program impacted in special ways some women from mixed marriages and their husbands in Turuhurane group located in Muhanga in the Southern province.

At the beginning of the program members of this group had high levels of trauma due to double victimisation from their families both matrimonial and relatives. To establish the benchmark indicators for the program, a base line survey was conducted among groups to measure levels, of trauma, trust and tolerance impact as well as peace activism. Factors measured under trauma included exposure to violence, levels of psychological distress, resilience, forgiveness and revenge. The baseline findings revealed that this group had trauma of 4.8 in 2015 and reduced to 4.0 at the end line survey in 2018. The overall score for trauma impact for the whole group stood at 2.4 in the end line survey. The findings reveal that the program significantly decreased trauma among group members.



Members of the 'Turuhurane' Space for Peace listen in during an experience sharing dialogue alongside NAR Psychotherapist Emilienne Mukansaro.



A father of one of the mixed marriage couples holds his child during the dialogue.

The decrease in trauma levels increased their resilience, forgiveness, reduced revenge, increased tolerance and relationships with their family members.

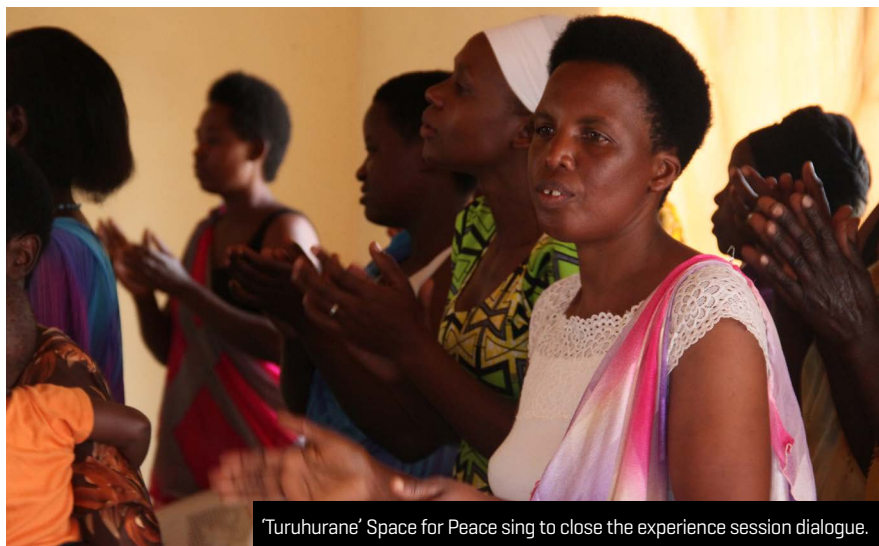
Towards the phase out of the program, NAR invited the husbands of group members to provide a platform for the women to share their experiences in trauma healing with their husbands and relatives and to hear the views of their relatives on the impact of the program among these women. Through this exchange, men testified of the positive behaviour change acquired by their wives and also requested that spaces for men are created in the future, to support them overcome their own traumas. Therefore, in light of this exchange with these couples, NAR decided to include relatives of participants in the final evaluation of the program to document the impact of the program among their immediate family members. This article narrates the significant change of one of the husbands for the member of the group.

Sam is married to Kaneza [real names have been omitted] and they have been married since 1985. Kaneza is a genocide survivor who was raped while pregnant during genocide despite efforts of her husband to protect her. Luckily, Kaneza survived the genocide but suffered harassment from her in-laws [brothers of her husband who committed genocide]. In his own words Sam stated:

*“Our relationship was frustrated by my family*



Local officials in Muhanga attended the experience sharing session to commend the journey of the Turuhurane group.



Turuhurane' Space for Peace sing to close the experience session dialogue.

**“Our children are happy because of our behavioral change. If she didn't attend this group we couldn't be living in peace now. I changed my behavior because she changed and our family is considered as a model.”**

*members and some neighbors who were not comfortable to see Kaneza back in our family after genocide because some of them who committed genocide crimes and had not been imprisoned were afraid she could report them. These frustrations affected our relationship in ways that affected both us and our children. My wife and I went into serious conflict before she joined this group. We had no peace at home, sometimes she could spend her time out without doing anything and would take too much beer in bars, but now she stays at home, we work together, we got a cow and she takes care of it. I thank the group so much because we live in peace and take beer at home together. Our children are happy because of*

*our behavioral change. If she didn't attend this group we couldn't be living in peace now. I changed my behavior because she changed and our family is considered as a model.”*

In this story we see how Kaneza's behavior change through the program impacted her husband and her children. She gained tolerance, a sense of self-worth, and healing that helped her become a responsible mother and a loving wife in ways that have impacted her husband. This couple has changed and is working together with common vision for the development of their home. This change resonates with the theory of change of this program where NAR and Interpeace believed that if people both young and old engage in processes of healing and inclusive dialogue to overcome social division and wounds of the past, it will deepen their resilience to violent conflict. In addition, this demonstrates that healing is also linked to social economic stability. From this experience we also learn that the program had triple effect or spiral over effect from participants to their families which was never foreseen at the beginning of the program. Thus, it is important to state that therapeutic psychosocial group approach facilitated through safe spaces make healing possible in the post-genocide context across different categories of people. **PI**



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# In our next edition

November - December, 2018

# Peace **Insight**

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## About Never Again

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## 2018's SUCCESS STORIES

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