

# 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.

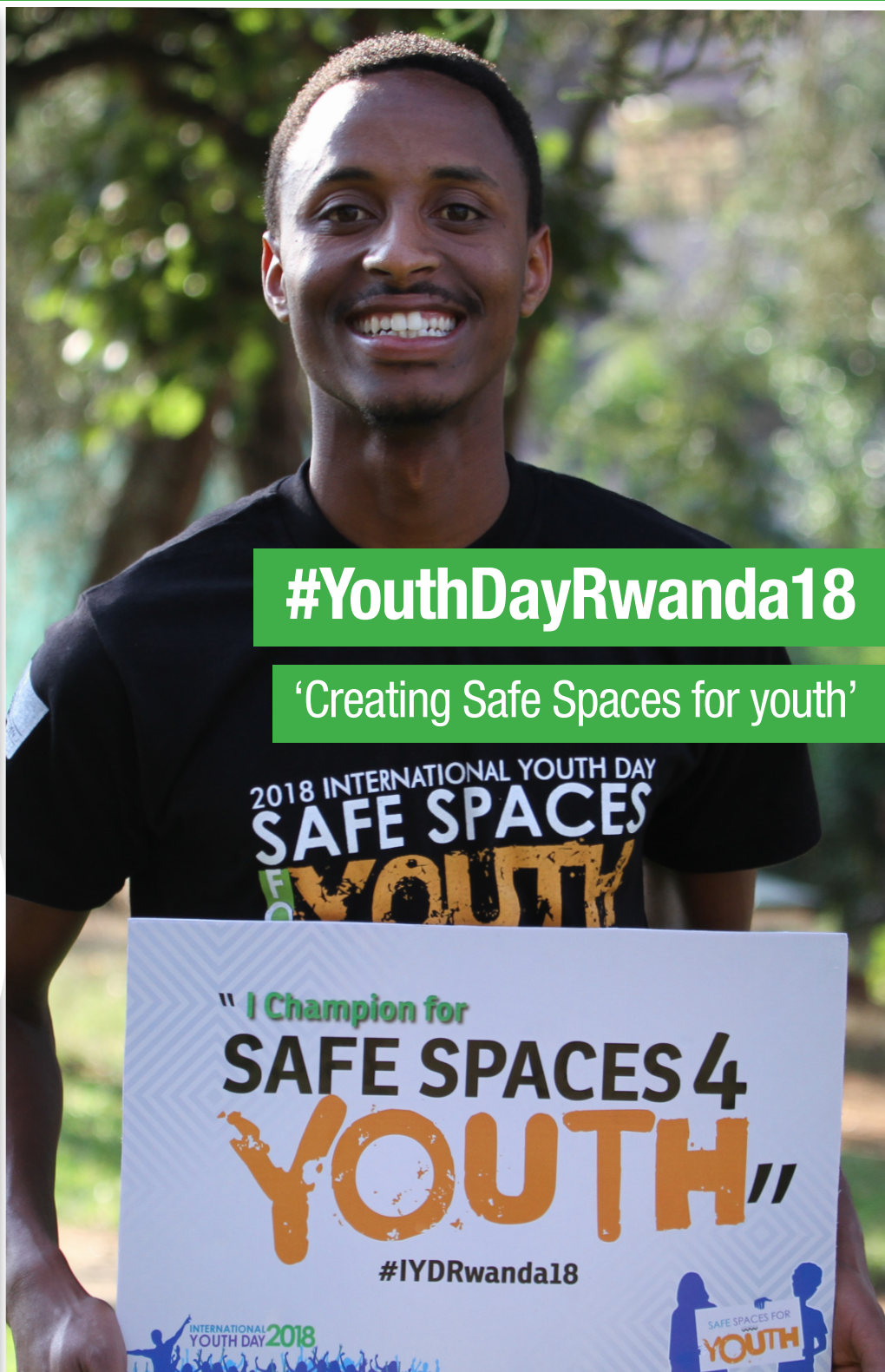
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*never*  
again

— Rwanda —



#YouthDayRwanda18

'Creating Safe Spaces for youth'

**NAR hosts Youth for IYD Celebration 18'** : Young participant of the 2018 IYD celebration posing for a photo with #IYDRwanda18 placard after the event.



PEACEBUILDING:

# NAR celebrates 'Safe Spaces for Youth'



Two youth participants pose for a photo after the Youth Day celebrations.

If one would say that August was more of a month for the youth, they would not be far from the truth. As the world marked the International Youth Day on 12th August and the United Nations gathered Youth and Sustainable Development Goals advocates under the theme of "Safe Spaces for the Youth", Never Again Rwanda convened

youth and other partners in youth related empowerment to discuss the functionality and challenges of safe spaces for youth. Exploring the role of safe spaces for youth as influential agents of change in achieving freedom of expression, mutual respect, and constructive dialogue, the day aimed to promote youth engagement

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**Appreciation:**

Never Again Rwanda would like to recognise our partners GIZ, USAID, Swedish Embassy, NED, NURC, Interpeace, and the European Union in supporting our work.

**Disclaimer:**

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

and empowerment. The readiness and convenience of physical and virtual safe spaces can enhance young people's potential by creating a common platform and opportunities for creativity. A dialogue was facilitated between government officials, academia and civil society representatives and -most importantly- youth groups with the goal of offering practical solutions to the challenges of creating youth-friendly spaces that are safe and dignifying.

In his welcoming remarks, the Executive Director of Never Again Rwanda noted that although youth were manipulated into committing Genocide, they are also playing a vital role in the reconstruction of peace processes in the post-genocide Rwanda. He continued to say that safe spaces are vital platforms, which help youth to openly share their views and opinions: "If the future of the world is to be entrusted into the hands of our younger generation, then providing them safe spaces today is one way to ensure that the future will be safe and bright". He also urged youth to appropriately use the existing spaces

so that they can contribute to building the sustainable and peaceful country.

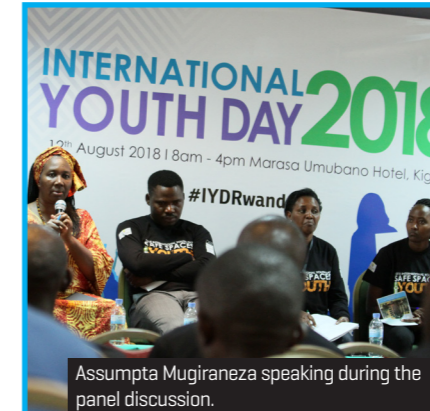
The Director of Youth Economic Empowerment at the Ministry of Youth, Ngabonziza Benoit, reiterated the political will of the Rwandan government to establish safe spaces for youth in order to advance their empowerment so that they can be engaged in positive opportunities for civic participation at all levels.

The Chairman of National Itorero Commission, Hon. Edouard Bamporiki, who was among the Panelists mentioned that "Safer spaces for youth should be categorized accordingly to different groupings to enable young people to feel free to contribute without fear of being judged, this can work through grouping them into small numbers per age or backgrounds". He also added that "Youth should raise their voices when they see things are not working appropriately as a good way to use the existing platforms".

Diane Uwamahirwe shared her experiences from NAR's safe spaces describing them as a safer environment where youth are able to heal their wounds while Murenzi Tristan mentioned that in safe space youth should not only focus on their own development but also the country's future as well as to embrace their past in a bid to combine the efforts for building the future of the country".

Since its inception in 2002, Never Again Rwanda's (NAR) activities have been largely dominated by youth engagement, empowerment and mentorship. Some of the activities have ranged from providing spaces for dialogue, equipping youth with critical thinking and technical skills among so much more. In peacebuilding, one of NAR's components, creating these safe spaces is a vital first step in allowing young people to share their experiences of conflict, and work towards achieving a more peaceful future. Currently NAR has 101 Clubs officially registered with Affiliation Status, with a total of 4,207 members including 2,031 Male and 2,176 Female. The event that attracted over 120 participants is part of the Societal healing and Participatory Governance in Peace Programme that is jointly implemented by Interpeace and supported by SIDA - Sweden in Rwanda. **PI**

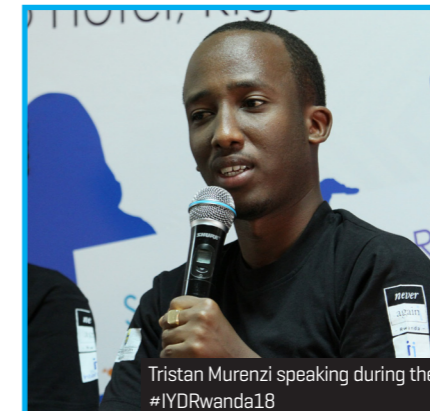
## IN PICTURES:



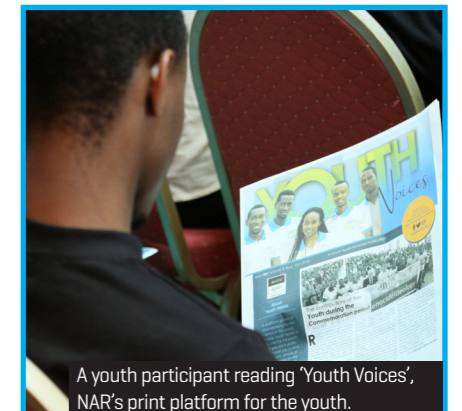
Assumpta Mugiraneza speaking during the panel discussion.



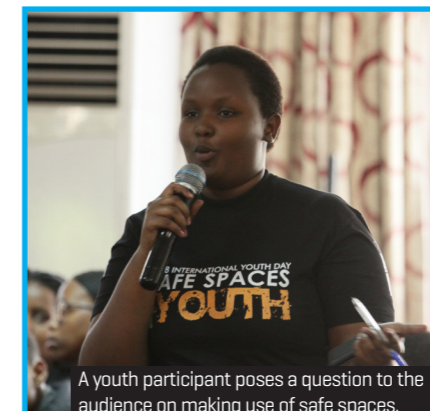
Emmanuel Karangwa collects first placed prizes from our Executive Director.



Tristan Murenzi speaking during the #IYDRwanda18



A youth participant reading 'Youth Voices', NAR's print platform for the youth.



A youth participant poses a question to the audience on making use of safe spaces.



**Light Moment:** Youth participants pose for a photo with event placard.



'VAN girls' performing for the audience during the #IYDRwanda18 celebrations.



**Light Moment:** Two participants share a photo together after the event.



# What do Safe Spaces mean to you?

The most important voice in understanding the significance of #SafeSpaces4Youth are those of the youth themselves. Taking this into account, Peace Insight's Peter Ndahiro took time to engage a number of youth and relevant stakeholders on what safe spaces mean to them and their communities.



Nadege Inema

"It is important to have safe spaces for youth which are free of judgement. Spaces like this make you feel like you are speaking from your own bedroom. This is important for youth to be able to express themselves confidently."



Yvan Gatete

"The debate club at my school is my example of a safe space for the youth that I make use of. We are able to express ourselves to our peers and also understand the issues that we the youth face in our communities."



This year's United Nations International theme for Youth Day 2018 was 'Safe Spaces for Youth'. The 2030 UN Agenda for Sustainable Development emphasizes the need for the provision of space towards inclusive and sustainable urbanization.



Sanny Aline

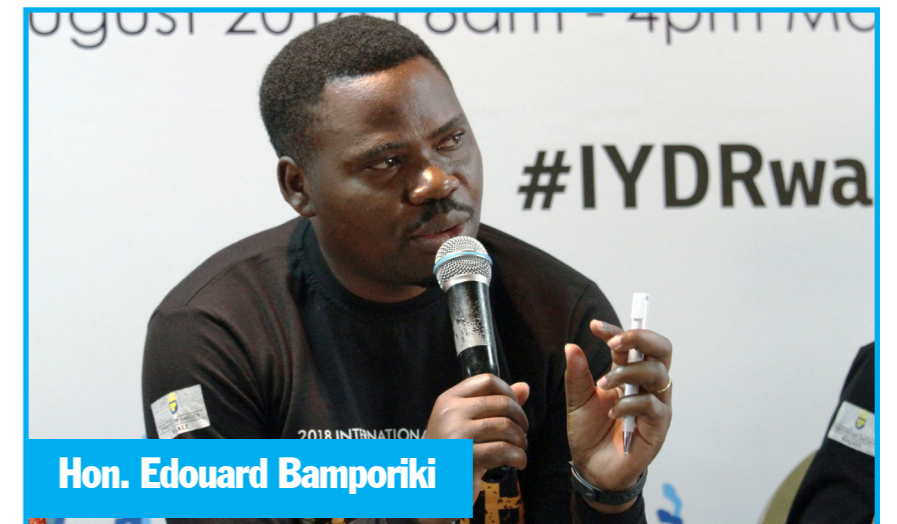
## Experiencing the IYD 2018

As I took my seat eagerly awaiting the beginning of the 2018 IYD celebration, I scanned through the over 100 youth and saw the country's future. I saw a generation of peace and safety, I saw a group with the desire to make positive change and sustainable growth and development happen. Dr. Joseph Ryarasa Nkurunziza, Executive Director of NAR, delivered one quote during his keynote speech that stuck with me.

"You [youth] complain that you are not consulted during decision making, how are you going to be consulted if you do not attend all platforms provided by the government like the monthly communal activities, the community dialogues, among so many others?" This got me thinking about the fact that young people today are shunning such programs, yet they are ideal to voice their views and ideas.

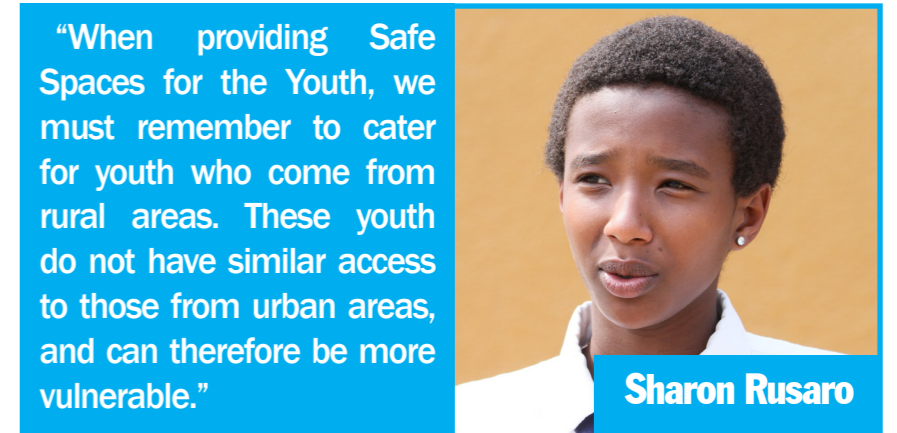
After the speeches came the fun part, the performances from the youth who were in the Youth Arts Competition in song, poetry and drawing categories. The session made the afternoon more exciting as the youth used their talents to talk about peace and make their contribution in denouncing genocide ideology and hatred. Although there had to be winners and losers, at least they all walked away with an appreciation gift, an element that is vital when advancing the principles of peace building.

The event served as one of the best examples of safe spaces for youth.



Hon. Edouard Bamporiki

"Safe spaces for youth should be categorized accordingly to different groupings to enable young people to feel free to contribute without fear of being judged, this can work through grouping them into small numbers per age or backgrounds. We need youth to raise their voices when they see things are not working appropriately."



Sharon Rusaro

"When providing Safe Spaces for the Youth, we must remember to cater for youth who come from rural areas. These youth do not have similar access to those from urban areas, and can therefore be more vulnerable."



Youth from the East African region take part in group work during the 2017 Regional Peace-Building Institute.



## GOVERNANCE:



Youth attending the awareness raising campaign watch on during the football tournament in Nyabihu.

# Birandeba Campaign:

## A space for youth to take an active role in the society

If the opportunities are made available within their reach, youth can be positive change agents in their communities; they can take a lead in finding solutions of the issues that affect their own lives through organizing various events and approaches to reach out to their fellow peers and empower them with skills and knowledge to continue building the culture of respecting and promoting human rights in their communities.

Guided by this principle, following a training on human rights and democratic decision-making processes under Never Again Rwanda's 'Inzira Nziza' activity supported by USAID, trained youth have started to independently organize community level activities aimed at strengthening accountability through promoting and enhancing their meaningful

participation. Between July-August, they held the second annual awareness-raising campaigns and events (Birandeba campaign) in five districts: Huye, Gisagara, Nyamagabe, Nyabihu, and Ngororero.

The annual awareness-raising campaigns target youth, local leaders, communities and youth institutions to instil greater trust in young people and this year, the campaign ran under the theme: "role of youth in democratic governance and fight against injustices in communities". During the campaign, youth organised public debates which offered the opportunity for them to engage on democracy and youth engagement in democratic processes. Youth also showcased their talents during the campaign through various approaches such as public debates, soccer tournaments, radio

**The campaign has consisted of awareness raising events, community dialogue sessions as well as a youth football tournaments in different sectors of Nyabihu District (Karago, Mukamira, Jomba and Bigogwe).**

shows, songs related to Inzira Nziza goals, and participatory theatre.

In all the activities, the youth attracted their peers to listen to some key positive messages on youth involvement and some of the realities and issues within their communities, while

raising possible solutions. Some participants had a lot to say about the training they received: "After being trained under Inzira Nziza, we raised awareness on building the confidence of youth for their meaningful participation in our communities. Now we have attracted a good number of our peers to help local leaders in raising awareness on Government programs in our communities". Male participant "Leaders, at all levels, have to consult the women and youth and address their needs

Engaging young people means policy decisions to them are appropriate, relevant, and responsive. Youth are the vital force to drive the nation, policy processes have to be transparent and accountable.



District Community Liaison Officer (DCLO) and Inspector of Police (IP), Alexandre Minani, addressing the youth during the awareness raising campaign on youth participation.



into citizen's needs and concerns and provide responsive feedback on them". Male participant The Executive Secretary of

Mukamira in Nyabihu district, Gahutu Tebuka Jean Paul, underlined the fact that youth should not be considered as a problem but rather potential agents of transformation within their communities. He also called upon the youth to participate in all processes of the upcoming parliamentary elections.

"We need more youth to be involved in our decision-making processes such as elections, raising awareness on human security issues, and reaching out to young people in vulnerable households". He added

Throughout the past campaigns, it was observed that empowering youth with skills on human rights and political issues helps increase awareness among their peer thus providing an incentive to become more involved in decision making processes.

Inzira Nziza is an USAID-funded activity which has trained 500 youth and local leaders on human rights, youth participation, and democratic decision-making processes, implemented in 5 districts (Nyamagabe, Gisagara, and Huye from Southern province, Nyabihu, and Ngororero from the Western Province). [PI](#)

# 5

### pillars for fostering Youth Participation

1. Transparency in exchanging information
2. Regular updates on what is happening in the community
3. Emphasis on capacity-building and improving self-esteem
4. Accountability from leaders when shared issues arise
5. Fostering community togetherness and inclusiveness

and priorities: We all belong to Rwanda and it is ours. We are not ashamed to hold the leaders accountable if they deviate from this national political will. This kind of partnership is all we need to make our country an inclusive society where citizen-centred governance reigns and is sustainable". Female participant "We would like to request them to conduct more field visits in order to have insight



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## OPINION:

**Debby Karemera**

Peace Education Unit Manager- NAR

# How 'Creative Expression' is giving youth a voice in peacebuilding

Over the years, various peacebuilding scholars have recognized that peacebuilding processes would be more sustainable if they not only focus on theoretical perspectives but practical aspects as well. In our current society, poverty, violence, family conflicts economic instability, domestic violence, discrimination and early pregnancies have continually been highlighted by youth as some of the challenges to peace. To address these challenges it requires both theoretical and various practical modes of expression. The creation of platforms for youth is one of the strategies that has become useful for youth since they are able to come together to discuss about challenges to peace and in turn, learn from each other's experience, network and change their perceptions. At some of these platforms, youth are able to showcase their creative talents like public speaking, arts, poetry, singing and drama.

One of the platforms that gives a voice to youth is Never Again Rwanda's Public Speaking and Exchange, which begun in 2011 where youth from Rubavu and Kigali debated on commemoration, however it was realized that conducting debates on commemoration wasn't two-sided so focus shifted to peacebuilding. In 2014 NAR and its partners revisited the format of the Public Speaking and Exchange to

incorporate "Do No Harm" approaches. As a result of the meeting, the term Public Speaking Competition was changed to Public Speaking and Exchange which took away the aspect of competition and focused more on collective efforts to promote peace, solidarity and cohesion among youth in Rwanda and the Great Lakes Region.

This year for both the local and regional exchange, discussions were organized in schools, among peace club members on the theme "Peace starts with me! How can I use my creativity to tackle the issues hindering Peace in our families, schools and communities?" From the local exchange, two students were chosen to represent their fellow youth at the Regional Public Speaking and Exchange, where students Rwanda, Uganda, DRC and Burundi worked in groups, as they gave speeches shedding light on key issues they considered as hindrances to peace. In addition each of the groups prepared a creative component to complement their speeches, which varied poems, short skits and drama among the different groups.

The element of creativity was introduced in 2016 during the Local Public Speaking and Exchange with the aim of encouraging youth to focus on realities in their communities, boost confidence most especially among youth who felt shy speaking and provide a visual representation of their speeches. Through this creative component, youth have been able to come up with constructive visual representation of their understanding of peacebuilding and issues hindering peace in their communities as well as demonstrate how they can use their talents for a good cause. The uniqueness of this creative expression especially for the Regional Public Speaking and Exchange is that the audience who don't understand English or French since the speeches are in both languages can be



A group of poets and musicians from Burundi, DRC, Rwanda, and Uganda, perform an artistic piece on peacebuilding in the region.

able to understand the messages youth are portraying. This is considered key since youth are encouraged to share what they've learned with their surrounding communities of which some may not be able to fully understand both languages. One of the most eye catching creative component was demonstrated by one of the groups where they burnt a piece of paper in half to show that they detest violence and that the cycle of violence can be broken as long as there is the will.

As practicing peace builders, it is important to acknowledge the fact that peacebuilding is not a one size fits all process, it requires constant review of existing approaches that can yield a positive impact and sustainable results. Furthermore in our current diverse society youth are exposed to so much, however if they are engaged in activities that accord them responsibility and make them aware of the role in peacebuilding process, they will be less likely to actively participate in harmful acts nor be influenced to commit crimes. In this case creative expression most especially among youth enables them to show case their talents at the same time visually demonstrate how they can promote peace in their respective communities while reaching out to not only youth but their communities at large. **PI**

## PEACEBUILDING:

There is a growing recognition that as agents of change, young people are critical actors in conflict prevention and sustainable peace. But peace building processes ought to incorporate different approaches of expression and dealing with the past wounds, and if youth are to be meaningfully engaged, then different forms of art have proven effective. Driven by this vision, in order to provide the opportunity to youth to express their ideas and share their opinions to contribute to the peace building process, on 31st July 2018, NAR hosted a Youth Arts Competition aimed to encourage youth to



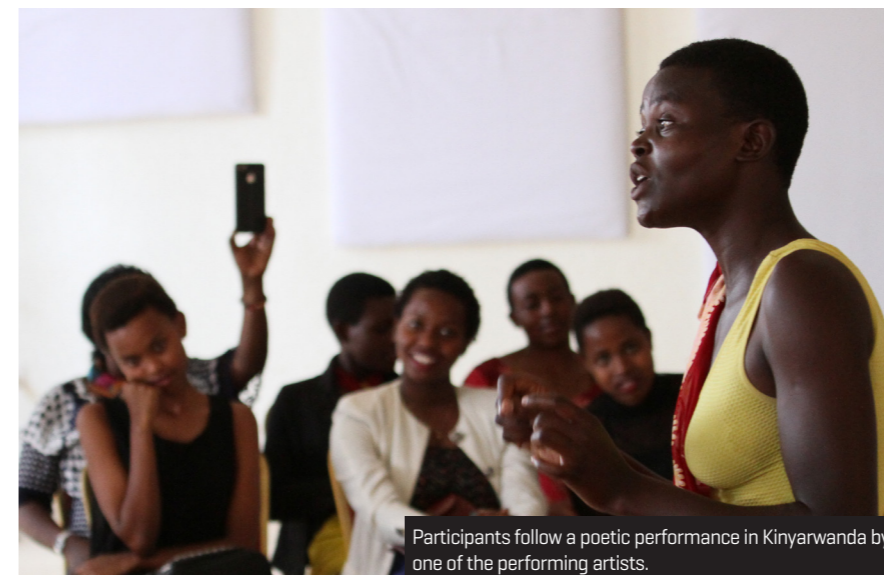
One of the youth participants of the Art Competition performing a musical piece entitled 'Genocide Ideology must be defeated.'

express their ideas and their perspectives on peace building through their talents.

While opening the competition, the Acting Executive Director at Never Again Rwanda, Eric Mahoro noted that the importance of the competition was to offer the youth a golden opportunity to express their voice through their talents in peace building, by sharing a message which will positively impact their communities; while the Acting Head of Programs Florence Batoni, urged the youth to use the space to articulate their experiences and creativity in building peace within their communities. One musician Tom Close who was part of the judges at the competitions for the singing performances urged the young artists not to focus on winning but to keep using their talents to shape positive attitudes amongst fellow youth.

The event provided an opportunity for youth to creatively express their contributions to the peace building process as well as to find their voices for peace through their talents. Josiane Murekatete, a member of spaces for peace group noted: "Youth are able to sensitize society members to tolerate, respect human rights, and create a sense of peace by using our talents; we are the powerful pillars of peace." Gatete Yvan from Lycee de Kigali noted: "Let unity conquer segregation. Let peace overcome wars. Let's build peace like ants build their home, a peace able to cover future generations. Let's remember daily that 'what unites us is greater than what separates us'". He added that youth must fight against divisions, standing one with love as their weapon, with unity as their shield, with freedom as their hope and as peace as their motive.

Building peace should be primarily about connecting with people and promoting relationships between groups. Young people's inclusion in the peace and security agenda and in society more broadly is key to building and sustaining peace. This reaffirms the important role youth can play in deterring and resolving conflicts and are key constituents in ensuring the success of both peacekeeping and peacebuilding effort. **PI**



Participants follow a poetic performance in Kinyarwanda by one of the performing artists.



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**Celestin Nsengiyumva**

Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning Specialist - NAR

# Building trust, tolerance, and social proximity through ‘Spaces for Peace’

The 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi destroyed physical and economic infrastructures, human development and the social fabric. However, over time, the government of Rwanda and its development partners have invested more in rebuilding the nation from all spheres and as a result of these efforts, Rwanda is said to be on a good track for development as evidenced by several reports. In a bid to cement and build on government’s relentless efforts, civil society organizations have tried to set up healing, reconciliation and peace building programmes across the country to deal with wounds, mistrust, limited social cohesion, and genocide ideology.

Various initiatives were introduced and these include: Gacaca courts, Abunzi (Mediators), commemorations practices, Itorero ry’igihugu, Ndi Umunyarwanda and the establishment of the National Unity and Reconciliation all aimed to promote social cohesion among Rwandans of diverse backgrounds as well as coordinate all peace building efforts. However, the process of post-genocide reconciliation in Rwanda cannot be limited to the provision of justice and building social coexistence; it also needed the provision of psychological support to victims, returnees, bystanders, rescuers, diaspora community and even perpetrators. Each group of people needed special attention to heal and later build trust, tolerance and social proximity in their communities.

Hinged on NAR’s Societal Healing and Participatory Governance in peace programme implemented with Interpeace, the “Spaces for Peace” which are dialogue sessions conducted in safe space, have shown positive outcomes. Under the facilitation of professional psychotherapists and or community based trained Peace Agents, 450 people have been involved in these Spaces for Peace in Gasabo, Nyarugenge, Karongi, Huye, Gisagara,

“Today, members of the Spaces for peace have demonstrated increased trust, tolerance of diversity, resilience and reduction in trauma.”

Muhanga, Nyagatare, Musanze, Nyabihu, Rubavu, Gicumbi, Nyagatare, Ngoma and Rulindo Districts. At the beginning, 4 years ago, the wounds and impact of trauma were very high, and the level of trust and openness among spaces for peace was very low, while majority of members had fear, anger, and revenge tendencies, hopelessness and couldn’t participate in community development.

“I used to live in isolation. I would stay at home for days without talking to anyone because for me any sounds were noise to my ears. I was surprised to be part of this group; I couldn’t imagine how I can sit together with Tutsi survivors when I have some family members jailed for committing genocide. Initially, I thought everyone in the space including the Peace Agent were Tutsi survivors. But after three dialogue meetings, a woman survivor comforted me and advised me to feel free. Since then, I felt



Members of a Space for Peace in Muhanga district listen to NAR facilitators making a visit to the space.

In a safe space, people can express themselves honestly and authentically. They can contribute actively without fear of being judged on account of their social identities.

more open and relieved because of how the group welcomed me and how the peace agent treated us equally. I am happy because I feel part of the group”, a female participant from Turuhurane, Muhanga.

Today, members of the Spaces for peace have demonstrated increased trust, tolerance of diversity, resilience and reduction in trauma. The programme has also observed an increased level of openness among the space members, where they share about their traumatic experiences beyond the group members to a bigger community exchange gathering. Also, members of spaces for peace developed a sense of social support for the vulnerable people in their communities. For example, members of twubakane group in Rukumberi sector renovated a house of a vulnerable man, and jointly collected money and visited a sick old woman who had been hospitalized for a longtime. One Nzayirwanda who belongs to a historically marginalized group said “I was surprised when group members came to support me after I had lost a relative; even my fellow community members were shocked because normally no one outside our community ever comes to our rescue”.

Notably, a number of participants have through the spaces of peace found a new “family” that has helped to restore their sense of belonging. This healing that has taken place within individuals has reportedly had a positive impact on their lives, their families and their communities through their acquired skills; -



Abasangirangendo Space for Peace members sitting together during one of their discussions on healing and wounds.

some of them have even taken on leadership roles.

“If someone offered me a leadership position before joining this group I would have turned down the offer. This is because I thought that local leaders were at the forefront when it came to killing individuals from diverse backgrounds based on what I witnessed during the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi. But when I joined this group, my perception changed and I now believe that I can make a difference in my community. I am now using the acquired critical and listening skills, in analyzing and solving conflicts among the people I lead. I am also ready to use the trauma healing skills to handle the trauma related cases that could

emerge in my community, especially during the commemoration period.” Male peace agent of Abanyamahoro space; also the Executive Secretary at Kareba cell, Nyabihu district

The spaces for peace have shown tangible results towards healing the societal wounds and paved way for development. However, the society still has unhealed wounds and the journey is still long. Never Again Rwanda will continue to implement community level healing and have started recently to engage other actors such as National Unity and Reconciliation Commission and Ministry of Health to adopt psychosocial healing approaches to extend the services to the wider society. **PI**



**GOVERNANCE:**



Hon. Wellars Gasamagera, Dr. Felicien Usengumukiza, and Prof. Aggee Shyaka take part in a panel discussion moderated by NAR's Eric Mahoro during the Imihigo Research Dissemination Meeting.

**Dissemination Meeting:  
Findings highlight factors  
impeding Citizen Participation**

**15**  
Districts researched.

**627**  
Citizens engaged on-field.

**62**  
Key informant interviews.

Over the last decades, a lot of efforts have been geared towards reconstructing Rwanda and nurturing a shared national identity. Hinged on that, practices/mechanisms were developed by the Government of Rwanda to enhance citizen's participation and promote more meaningful engagement toward the development of civic skills, and the prospect for citizens to be part of the solutions over their needs and concerns. One of those practices was the Imihigo, loosely translated as the performance contracts.

Since 2006, the home-grown governance policy, Imihigo has been credited with improving accountability and accelerating citizen-centered development and quality implementation of the national programs. However, for imihigo to continue improving effective and accountable implementation of local and national programs, a high level of citizen participation in its entire process [formulation, implementation, monitoring, review and evaluation] is required, yet, several studies conducted over the past years have consistently shown that, except in the implementation phase, citizen participation in other phases of imihigo process is low, even lower than 50%.

It is against this background that Never Again Rwanda (NAR) in partnership with Youth Association for Human Rights Promotion and Development AJPRODHO-JJUKIRWA used a qualitative research approach to examine why citizen participation in Imihigo is low and to understand what needs to be done in order to improve the rate at which citizens participate in Imihigo processes. The findings of the 7-month study collected from 627 informants that covered 15 districts were presented to key stakeholders at a national stakeholders' meeting.

The participants unanimously agreed that the research was a milestone to gain deeper understanding on gaps that hamper effective citizen participation and provided possible remedies to enhance the people's participation in local governments' Imihigo processes, a pillar that guarantees the country's sustainable growth and development. **PI**



Eric Birori is a Communications Officer at Never Again Rwanda. For feedback, please reach him at: [ebirori@neveragainrwanda.org](mailto:ebirori@neveragainrwanda.org)

**Findings on issues impeding citizen participation**

1. Limited capacity (approaches, tools, methodology) by local leaders and aides to genuinely engage citizens in public decisions.
2. Some citizens are not aware of their participation as a right and duty.
3. Most citizens and some local leaders are not generally knowledgeable about Imihigo processes.
4. Recurrent pressure to deliver on centrally-defined agenda.
5. Centrally defined rigid household Imihigo template.
6. Funding constraints for local priorities.
7. Some Imihigo are technically too complex; [e.g. road construction].
8. Culture of top-down led decisions is still prevalent amongst leaders.
9. Too tight planning and budgeting calendar.

**Proposed Policy Responses**

1. Ministry of Local Government to establish and institutionalize social audits to cross-check tangible evidence concerning whether or not genuine citizen participation in the entire Imihigo process effectively takes place;
2. Districts to revise the time [from day, time/working hours] of Inteko y'abaturage to enable citizens in formal employment and those in urban areas to also participate.
3. CSO's to build the capacity to generate research-driven data and conduct evidence-based advocacy.
4. Establish a comprehensive Imihigo policy and legal framework in Rwanda which binds local government to genuinely engage citizen in imihigo.
5. Revamp the mainstreaming of the youth and women needs and priorities in local government imihigo.
6. Increase the technical staff of the Cell to enable them to adequately support the Sector in mainstreaming community development programs and meeting local priorities.
7. Sensitize civil society members of their mandate to continuously educate citizens concerning their participation in decisions affecting their lives rights and obligations.

**We trust leaders to act on our behalf, meaning considering national priorities. We should note that priorities do not conflict with the needs of the citizens, they go together.**

- Prof. Aggee Shyaka  
Centre for Conflict Management



Prof. Aggee Shyaka of University of Rwanda responds to a participant question during the dissemination meeting.



Researchers, practitioners, local government staff, and other relevant stakeholders take notes and listen in to proceedings during the dissemination meeting.



Hon. Wellars Gasamagera addressing the audience during the panel discussion.



**Florence Batoni**  
Peacebuilding Team Leader - NAR

## “Safe and protected spaces are key contributing factors to healing”

Twenty four years after the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi, Rwanda has seen growth and development in terms of infrastructure, security, reconciliation and social tolerance through state and civil society initiatives. However, psychological wounds stemming from historical violence and other events that started in 1959 leading up to the genocide and its consequences remain a challenge. It is from this background that NAR and Interpeace jointly established the Societal Healing and Participatory Governance for Peace Program in 2015 to facilitate dialogue and create safe spaces for peace, in a bid to enable diverse groups to openly share their sensitive past and overcome their traumatic emotions and start the journey that would lead them to healing.

As part of the first exercise to inform the program implementation, a mapping of actors and approaches was conducted country wide to establish approaches used in healing and four approaches were found, the holistic, individual, community and group approach. Owing to its relevancy in the Rwandan context and can serve a wide range of people, NAR chose to use the psychosocial support group approach.

This approach was applied to all boundary partners including youth and community members from diverse and homogeneous

groups. At the beginning of these groups, members of the groups and peace building staff had concerns on how diverse groups would share their sensitive emotions. On one hand there were Genocide survivors who had suffered from isolation, grief, hopelessness, anger and fear of perpetrators, while on the other, there were ex-perpetrators or the members of their families who had suffered from shame, fear to face genocide survivors, stigma and anger. To ensure the program benefits more diverse groups, NAR involved survivors, new and old case returnees, ex-combatants, marginalized groups and people married in mixed marriages, as all the groups had suffered from their own unique traumatic experiences.

The question is how could these people meet and share their sensitive past and emotions? The answer is that these people were made to interact and openly share their sensitive stories through safe and protected spaces facilitated by professional psychotherapists. Personal emotional wounds are hardly shared openly, and for wounded groups to overcome their traumatic emotions and start a journey of healing, requires a space that provides them safety and dignity. Wounding events such as genocide shutter people’s hopes and sense of humanity and belonging. People lost their family and loved ones and became both



physically and psychologically isolated from the rest of the community members. When individuals live in isolation and are wounded, they lose meaning of life and they get lost in rhetoric questions of why? [kubera iki]?

Wounded individuals need a listening ear without judgment and a shoulder to lean and cry on. They also need a place for belonging. In order to achieve meaning and a belonging, these groups were supported through a safe space that accords them confidentiality and respect for each other’s opinion. They were mobilized to join psychosocial support groups voluntarily at their own will and were encouraged to start sharing their personal stories when psychologically ready to do so.

However, safe spaces become safe spaces when they are facilitated by professionals with experiences to facilitate wounded groups and have the capacity to manage strong emotions and professionally create safe ambience for group members to share sensitive issues that would not be otherwise shared openly. The question is what are those issues that people do not freely share in open spaces that would require safe and protected spaces? Perpetrators feared to disclose their sensitive stories due to shame and survivors feared the overwhelming emotions, marginalized groups [Batwa] feared to deal with the stigma, while the returnees felt that there was no spaces to share their wounds, but all these groups have been able to take steps in healing due to the safety of the spaces established and facilitated by NAR psychotherapists. **PI**



Space for Peace dialogue in Huye is opened by NAR facilitator Jean-Baptiste Hategikimana.

Read full version on: [www.neveragainrwanda.org](http://www.neveragainrwanda.org)

## PEACEBUILDING:



Dr. Joseph Ryarasa Nkurunziza speaking to the youth during the 'Critical Thinking for Peace Camp'.

# Creating the next generation of Critical Thinkers for Peace

During the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi, young people were “arguably the biggest force in carrying out the genocide”, as it has been shown in various reports, studies and articles - reason why it’s paramount for them to learn about sustaining peace and contributing to progress in their nation. Two young people Ian Manzi and Derrick Murekezi, former NAR youth club members started a project where youth convene for a week-long camp to learn and discuss about critical reading and writing, model UN, leadership, social impact and business innovation, all geared towards peace building and peace education.

Joining the youth during the camp, Dr. Joseph Nkurunziza Ryarasa, Executive Director of Never Again Rwanda, urged the young people at the youth camp to exercise tolerance, as a key pillar for advancing peace values. Dr. Joseph also noted that most young people today use social media to voice their opinions and views, but they also hide behind their online platforms to negatively criticize others, thus called on them to criticize but first analyse a statement before insulting any online user - using social media for social good. Open and honest dialogue lays a strong foundation for conflict management and eventually sustainable peace, so, as you use open spaces,



Youth listening attentively during the Critical Thinking for Peace camp.

**Open and honest dialogue lays a strong foundation for conflict management and eventually sustainable peace, so, as you use open spaces remember to use them honestly.**

- Dr. Joseph Ryarasa Nkurunziza  
Executive Director, Never Again Rwanda

remember to be honest, he added  
The 83 high school student leaders were eager to learn and thirsty for more skills and capacity to do more for them and the future generations. Thus the need for more organizations to commit to empower and engage youth to be the best and effective leaders of our country’s future - together we can do more. **PI**





# In our next edition

September 2018

# Peace Insight

Never Again Rwanda Newsletter

## About Never Again

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

**2** **Understanding 'Critical thinking for Peace':** How do the youth use critical thinking as a tool to prevent future conflict?

**4** **International Literacy Day:** Under the theme 'Read a book, Write your future, International Literacy Day saw the awarding of the best short story writers in Kinyarwanda.

**8** **Opinion:** Founder of 'Critical thinking 4 Peace' Ian Manzi discusses his work in fostering critical thinking amongst Rwanda's youth.

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again

— Rwanda —



Understanding  
'Critical thinking for Peace'

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