

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 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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6 Why the youth?: Eric Birori sat down with Omar Ndizeye to understand why NAR prioritizes the youth.

9 Pictorial: NAR affiliated peace clubs participate in commemoration.



– Rwanda –



Kwibuka 24 Youth championing the fight against inter-generational trauma



Conference on Trauma: Youth participant making a recommendation [top left]. Prof. Vincent Sezibera addressing youth [top right]. Minister of Youth Rosemary Mbabazi giving opening remarks [centre right]. Youth in a group discussion at the conference. [bottom]. **[Photos: Never Again Rwanda]**

PEACEBUILDING:



Youth panel sharing personal experiences on inter-generational trauma.

Dealing with the consequences of Inter-generational trauma

On the 3rd of April 2018, Never Again Rwanda hosted a national conference with an aim to establish a platform for the Rwandan youth and other key stakeholders to discuss and provide input into the national policy and practice for commemoration of the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi.

The conference was guided under the theme; Remember, Unite and Renew: Empowering post-genocide generation to overcome intergenerational trauma.

The conception of this theme was based upon perspectives gained from NAR's youth peace clubs, as many of its young members had stated that they recognized the issue of inter-generational trauma.

Opening the conference, Executive Director of Never Again Rwanda, Dr. Joseph Ryarasa Nkurunziza, reiterated the rationale on focusing on intergenerational trauma.

"Even if some of the youth we have today didn't experience the dark past of the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi, our interventions in the societal healing program have shown that they are the most affected by its negative impact, evidence of this is inter-generational trauma."

The Guest of Honor at the conference,

Rwanda's Minister of Youth Rosemary Mbabazi, in her remarks referred to the key pillars of Rwanda's social, political and economic transformation mentioned by H.E President Paul Kagame; Unity, thinking big, and being accountable. She referred to these as the key drivers of prosperity that youth need to keep in mind as they look to lead the country into the next generation.

She also pledged the full support of the Rwandan Government to youth in a bid to ensure that we have a wealthy nation that can deal with the consequences of inter-generational trauma.

Dr. Darius Gishoma an expert in clinical psychology, and Lecturer at the University of Rwanda, pointed towards youth demonstrating symptoms and signs of inter-generational trauma. He cited an example that during the 23rd commemoration period, of individuals who were diagnosed with mental health issues, 18% of them were between the age bracket of 14-21 years and 1.5% were 14 years old, numbers that seemed out of the ordinary.

A female youth panelist then shared her experience on her journey to healing. She attested to the fact that she had also heard

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Appreciation:

Never Again Rwanda would like to recognise our partners GIZ, USAID, Swedish Embassy, NED, NURC and Interpeace 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.

4 Youth recommendations on the way forward

1. There is a need for immediate assistance to parents who have traumatic experiences, in order to help them be able to tell their own stories.
2. Parents should be careful on how and when to tell their experiences to their children in order to not harm them.
3. There is a need to establish dialogue spaces between young people and the older generation so they can help each other in healing.
4. There is a need for mutual trust between parents and their children specifically when discussing history of Rwanda.



Youth in group discussions to form recommendations

Group of youth discussing how to overcome inter-generational trauma.

stories from her parents about the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi and that those stories had negatively affected her.

“When Genocide occurred, my parents were abroad, but the Rwandan history affected them because their relatives changed their names as a way to have access to education.

*Even if we can’t determine our history, we can determine the history of our children to make sure they will never face the same tragic story as we experienced. We should learn from our past mistakes and avoid disappointing our country’s expectations in us.” **PI***



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Youth participant addressing the audience.

Joseph Kalisa

Peacebuilding Program Intern - NAR

Breaking the Cycle of Psychological Trauma

After the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi in which more than 1 million people were exterminated in a period of 100 days, not one individual would have predicted its impact on the society. Scientists, especially mental health professionals, dealt with the immediate outcomes which included psychological trauma. Though there was a lack of skilled personnel to tackle this psychological trauma, efforts were made to console the traumatized nation and this saw different programs put into place and non-government organizations established especially to help genocide survivors.

We are witnessing a new form of psychological trauma with symptoms similar to those who lived through the traumatizing events but manifested in a generation born after genocide. This is not the only category of people expressing such symptoms; other categories include children or people who lived outside the country during the 1994 genocide, children of genocide survivors, and children born from different groups i.e. perpetrators and/or survivors. The mechanisms this type of transmission of trauma manifested in the second generation is still not known by many but we can find the answer in direct transmission or indirect transmission.

Directly, the parenting style may be interfered with by the parents' hesitance to respond to their children due to their unresolved trauma with those born from perpetrators suffering profound shame and guilt. Some traumatized parents also tend to find ease in sharing their traumatizing experiences with their children irrespective of the mental maturity of their children, thereby impacting the child's view of the environment and this coupled with association that is usually embedded in developmental stages of children, which

makes it inevitable to resist the transmission of psychological trauma. Association has also played part in the transmission of psychological trauma even to those who were not in Rwanda during the Genocide against the Tutsi. This is basically after identifying themselves with the traumatizing experiences that their relatives passed through. This parent-child transmission is not always visible, just like electricity it can be invisibly carried from a transmitter to a receiver; it is possible that unconscious experiences can also be transmitted from parents to their children through some complex process of extra-sensory communication. One can summarize this from the Rwandan saying that goes "Umuntu atanga icyo afite" loosely translates that one offers what s/he has.

Despite these areas, transmission of psychological trauma and others not mentioned, it is important to note that transmission isn't limited to trauma but also other psychological aspects like resistance and resilience. These aspects have been responsible for the healing and forgiveness seen in most of the Rwandan people.

Therefore, the work done by Never Again Rwanda and other peace building institutions, is to foster the healing process so as to stop the transmission of this type of trauma in the young generation. This can be seen in the recently held seminar on "Relevance of Psychology in Peace Building" that was held in the University of Rwanda organized by Never Again Rwanda in collaboration with Clinical Psychology Students Association, which looked at embracing the understanding of human psychodynamics, resilience and active bystander citizen participation. [PI](#)



“Unconscious experiences can be transmitted from parents to children. One can summarize from the Rwandan saying that goes “Umuntu atanga icyo afite” loosely translated that one offers what s/he has.

- Joseph Kalisa
Peacebuilding Program Intern - NAR

PEACEBUILDING SEMINAR

Relevance of Psychology in Peace Building

University of Rwanda - Huye Campus 18th April 2018, 13:20hrs



A panel consisting of Mr. Andre Musagara, Mrs. Ignacienne Bucyeye, Joseph Kalisa, Prof. Vincent Sezibera, and Mrs. Adelite Mukamana, addresses the audience on aspects of psychology.

“Mental Health is Key in Peacebuilding”

- Clinical Psychology Experts

When Never Again Rwanda was ideated about 15 years ago, its core goal was to create a space for all university students, regardless of origin or ethnicity, to be able to discuss and share their experiences and wounds in the hope that they would be able to foster an environment of understanding, unity, reconciliation, tolerance and mutual empathy. Since then, Never Again Rwanda has evolved from a mere platform of university students to a big forum for all Rwandans, especially youth, through varied inclusive approaches that could provide solutions to more complicated or less obvious issues that people may have as a result of the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi, such as inter-generational trauma or other societal dysfunctions.

Among these approaches is the recent Peace Building Seminar that was convened at the University of Rwanda – Huye campus, in collaboration with the Clinical Psychology Students Association of Rwanda (CPSAR), under the theme “The Relevance of Psychology in Peace Building”. CPSAR, a student-led association focused on clarifying common misconceptions about mental health, used this as an opportunity to raise awareness on the issues surrounding mental health and how psychological approaches are



Students of the University of Rwanda follow proceedings.

often disregarded in addressing the varied post conflict challenges.

The seminar aimed to demonstrate the role of emotionality and irrationality in managing and carrying out a conflict, to highlight areas where one can find psychological support and to teach youth about the interconnectivity of the human psyche and how it fits into conflict management. During the event, a panel of experts and youth discussed and reflected on the cause of conflicts, how they are sparked off by emotions and feelings, and how to deal with stereotypes and the need to pay attention to the different psychological needs for the various groups.

“There are ripple effects of conflicts, if a man

beats a woman, the woman beats the children, the children beat the hen and the hen destroys property a healthy mind is vital in building peace” Mukamana Adelite, NAR.

Youth were urged to become more conscious of all aspects of mental health if their efforts in peace building are to yield tangible results. **PI**



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Q&A

The Big Question: Why the Youth?

Peace Insight's **Eric Birori** talked to **Omar Ndizeye**, the youth coordinator at Never Again Rwanda, to understand why the organization prioritizes the young people and what it means for the sustainability of the current programs.

Why does NAR work with youth?

We work with young people to empower them to become active citizens and to engage them in the decision making processes as well as to ensure they are championing the values of tolerance in the journey to build sustainable and peaceful society.

Why engage youth in political and democratic processes?

Young people have different challenges including poverty, exclusion by the older generation, and limited knowledge in politics, which hinder their participation in various activities. Thus, NAR engages young people to contribute to the promotion of peaceful dialogue and democratic values through human rights based approaches and influence their understanding on the rights of the most vulnerable groups in Rwanda.

You work with youth in affiliated clubs and associations; what has been achieved from these clubs so far?

So far, the clubs have registered tremendous successes. Those who are engaged in arts and participatory theater such as Isoko Arts, Imfura Arts,

and Mwanga troupe among others, have worked on different projects that have positively impacted the community. Others have amongst themselves started saving schemes that have given birth to income generating activities and employed some among them.

What youth gain from the spaces for peace?

One of the most important values of Never Again Rwanda is diversity; this value is reflected within our clubs. All the clubs are composed of young people from different backgrounds as the greatest foundation is unity. In our clubs, youth are able to share, tolerate, and embrace each other's opinions.

Most of our clubs discuss peace building activities through the use of participatory theater, and songs and poems that reflect the country's history. Every year, most of NAR's affiliated clubs organize commemoration activities followed by participatory dialogues on Rwanda's historical background as well as devise mechanisms to prevent the future conflicts.

What diversity do you look for in those affiliated clubs?

Every historical event creates categories among the people. Post-genocide

Rwanda has various categories of people and stereotypes. Among the Rwandan population, there are those who were born before Genocide but were very young then, those born after the Genocide, those who belong to the families of the perpetrators, the genocide survivors, those born out of rape, and others who were born from exile. Talking about diversity is to mention all those categories from different backgrounds that form our country. We always encourage young people to embrace that diversity but also respect each other throughout debates and public speaking as well as in expressing their opinions.

How do you intend to sustain young people's clubs?

Through mentorship and close follow-ups of the youth clubs and associations, we will keep encouraging them to make a difference in their communities. **PI**



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By Eric Mahoro

Rwanda still has lingering memories of the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi which claimed over a million lives. Although one would say that adults were the master minds of the killing, the youth played a major role, especially in its implementation through participating in the organized killing squads.

The constitution of 2003 as amended in 2015, offers a lot of opportunities for youth to participate in the governance of the country, by providing them with representations at various levels—from the smallest administrative entity to the National Parliament—chamber of deputies. Many observers have even noted that the majority of leaders in Rwanda may have taken over their positions, or at least begun serving the country, when they were still youth, on top of the list, the president of the Republic, Paul Kagame. Notably, Rwanda has one of the youngest populations in the world with over 60% being between the ages of 15 to 35 years.

While participating in Never Again Rwanda's round table discussion in Kabaya Sector, Ngororero district, a young woman of approximately the age of 25 said, *"Lack of self-confidence among youth is quite often caused by negative attitudes of local leaders towards youth in various circumstances. Most of the time, they undermine our ideas and opinions which causes young people's self-confidence to*

Youth are the foundation for any country's hope. When given the right opportunities, they can contribute to a long term workforce constituting the sustainability of a nation's achievements.
- Eric Mahoro
Head of Programs - NAR



"A country that fails its youth fails its future"

A group of youth listen attentively during the International day of Peace celebrations 2017 hosted at the Rwanda Parliament.

fade away. Leaders should change their attitudes in order to work collaboratively with young people." She added.

It is a disappointment that youth mention that there are still some leaders, who think their role should be limited to energizing the participants, or sing in meetings—commonly known in Rwanda as 'gushyiraho morale' a practice of singing in meetings to increase participant energy.

Among the bottle necks expressed by leaders who participate in NAR discussions, there is limited understanding on the concept of youth participation, a point that may be seen as controversial given Rwanda's legal and policy framework that has ensured that youth are actively involved into all stages of governance. *"I changed my approach after completing the training on youth participation offered by Never Again Rwanda. Every time I organize a meeting, I check the presence of youth and ask them to contribute to the agenda before we move forward. It has been leading to good results"*. Said one of the Executive Secretaries of a cell in Save Sector, Gisagara District.

It's good to note that the Government has ensured that youth are included in the advisory councils at all levels. However, many participants in NAR spaces including those members of advisory councils have reiterated the fact that those do not necessarily represent youth's interests, and as a result, issues relating to youth needs and priorities keep being distorted in the major decision-making platforms. One of the participants said *"Youth concerns are most of the times not on the local leaders' list of priorities. What makes it hard is that the youth leaders who formally represent*

their peers in the advisory councils are not valued for their opinions and interests they stand for. They are silenced by other council members as they think national interests dominate over youth priorities."

While the President of the Republic of Rwanda was presenting his credentials to the National Electoral Commission last year in June, he called upon youth to participate in politics so that they can learn to be good leaders. The president told youth they should not dodge politics and he believes one way is to participate in the country governance. He said *"Politics will have something to do with you so you better have something to do with politics. I am not telling you how, I can only urge you to get involved in politics, and good politics"*. He added.

Whichever side one may take, youth participation into decision-making processes, be it at the national level or local level should continue to be nurtured. Youth need to be coached and mentored to be good leaders. The government has played a foundational role but more needs to be done to ensure that the seed that was planted is enabled to grow and be sustained. That requires the efforts of all the actors including the youth, the civil society, and the government, to address the current challenges which I believe are easier than the distance walked. **PI**



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What is your understanding on the importance of commemoration



Gisele Rugwiro

Commemoration is paying tribute to the loved ones we lost and acknowledging the historical facts that led to such atrocities. Through commemoration, we can develop a society that is conscious of what is at stake when one's right to exist is not respected.



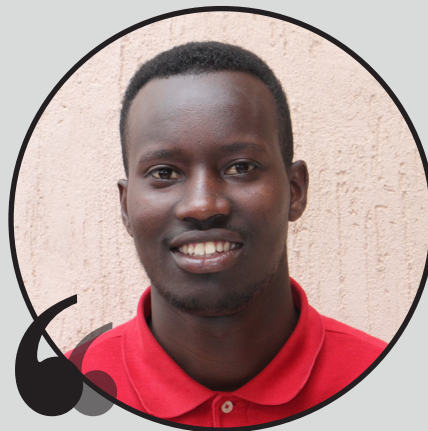
Eric Birori

It is a global responsibility to commemorate the Genocide against the Tutsi so as to respect the victims, stand with survivors, & shift our resilience from the old generation to the young, so that genocide never happens again.



Grace Usanase

During this period of commemoration, we are reminded to educate the future generation about genocide prevention. We also facilitate the healing journey of many, as we recognise the facts of what transpired during the Genocide against the Tutsi.



Jean De Dieu Iradukunda

It is everyone's duty to remember and preserve the memory of those who lost their lives during the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi. Commemoration ensures we pay tribute to the victims, and renew our vigour towards making 'Never Again' a reality.



Espérance Munyarugerero

It is important to take time to think deeply about your loved ones and to get connected to them emotionally. However commemoration must not only be considered as a time of falling into grief, but also to take power and rebuild ourselves and our country to stay stronger than before.



Peter Ndahiro

Commemoration not only allows us to remember our loved ones and give them the dignity that they deserve, but also renew & reinvigorate our zeal in ensuring such a tragedy can never happen again.

NAR Clubs Participate in Commemoration

NAR's affiliated youth clubs and associations took their own initiative to participate in country wide commemoration activities, offering support and participation in the 100 days of commemoration 24 years after the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi.

The youth peace clubs have used some of the lessons they have learned from their interactions with Never Again Rwanda, to contribute to the ongoing discussions in a variety of ways. Some youth clubs have taken members to directly participate in the discussions, while others have used the participatory theatre approach, to express their testimonies of reflection to communities. The youth in these clubs have recognised the importance of commemoration, so as to continue to lend a hand to a healing nation that needs the full support of its young population.



Nyabihu NAR peace club participating in discussions during the week of commemoration that centred around understanding the country's history.



Ngoma NAR peace club performing theatre during commemoration event held at the district level.



Rubavu NAR peace club performing theatre on wounds during the week of commemoration at an event held by the district.



Rubavu NAR peace club posing for a photo after their theatre performance for the district community members.

OPINION:

Healing and participatory governance: why is it important in post-genocide Rwanda?

Every society has historical, cultural, social, psychological, and political repels that drive everything in it and also define the relationships between its members. In Rwanda, it's the history of the Genocide against the Tutsi in 1994, that left various people if not all affected by either visible or invisible wounds. After the horrendous atrocities, victims and perpetrators had to live together despite their differences. To build a shared future for Rwanda as a nation, they had to share the same schools, the same hospitals, the same water sources, and the same resources. After the genocide, the Government of Rwanda introduced political and institutional reforms to create an inclusive society. However, we can't forget the fact that both the leaders and citizens belonged to a society that was wounded by the genocide. There are some behaviors exhibited among some leaders and citizens – trauma, depression, anger, domestic violence, mistrust, discrimination, and isolation among so many others, all of which directly or indirectly have an adverse impact on the efforts of healing and governance.

In 2015, Never Again Rwanda, joined other stakeholders [both government and non-government] to initiate the societal healing and participatory governance program. The program supports spaces of dialogue, providing opportunities for highlighting instances of profound healing and reconciliation among community members of diverse backgrounds. Along the implementation phase, members of those spaces started demonstrating a change in behavior, owing to the fact that they had gotten people to listen to them and not judge them, people they could trust with their deepest secrets and vice versa. However, NAR came to learn that healing is a journey, not a destination.

Both aspects of healing and governance are interlinked. If you think about it, can a wounded person lead others; can a wounded society constructively engage with their leaders? Both



Schoolchildren are accompanied by NAR as they take a first visit through Kigali Gisozi Memorial site.

questions are likely to have a negative answer. *"Before joining NAR's space of peace, I hadn't healed and had never thought of becoming a leader, because I had it in my mind that leaders always plan to kill any given ethnic group, but through different healing sessions, I decided to become a leader to create positive change and be different from the previous leaders"* said Makuza Jean Claude, a peace agent and Cell Executive Secretary in Nyabihu District.

Makuza's story, just like many other stories documented by Never Again Rwanda during the 4 years of intervention are an indicator that healing is possible, but it needs deliberate and relentless efforts of psychosocial support in a post genocide community like Rwanda.

All societies that emerge from extreme violence have no choice but to find adequate strategies to tend to both the visible and invisible wounds caused by atrocities, because genocide is a crime that affects the society as a whole, it is very important for the Rwandan society to examine how it will continue to fulfill its social responsibility to tend to invisible wounds.

- Prof. Naasson Munyamutsa
Former Country Director - NAR

When an emotional wound is not healed, the victim wallows in the pain, feeling worse and worse every day, devoid of energy and joy, this is the reason why one would need an enduring ear to listen. It's been noted that talking to a compassionate and nonjudgmental person can heal emotional wounds. Eventually a healed person will find themselves open to work with others and will be confident to voice their opinion.

"Nowadays I attend umuganda and meetings in our village because I have found the true meaning of life. Now I have a sense of belonging..." said one female member of NAR's spaces for peace.

Although there are some laudable strides that have been registered in unity, reconciliation and healing in Rwanda, there is need for more collaboration and coordination between civil society, religious leaders, and government institutions, to build a future with a healed society and prevent the vicious cycle of trans-generational trauma, with the aim of fostering sustainable economic development among individuals with a shared future. **PI**



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PEACEBUILDING:



Members of World Mission NAR peace club perform theatre for the Swedish Embassy delegation, on different kinds of wounds affecting the Rwandan society.

Expressive Approaches in an attempt to heal wounds

“ I used to ask myself if I had any reason to live, life didn't make any sense to me, I lived a somber and tearful life because of the wounds I carried with me each day, but now I have a family, people I can share my pain with and they do the same, I am a better person and I have a purpose and hope in life.

- Member of World Mission Peace club

This was one of the rhythmic statements that was said during one of the performances of world mission club, a peace club that is affiliated to Never Again Rwanda. One of the performers noted that the journey has been long, and although they can't say they are totally healed, they came from a darker past of intermittent traumatic situations to a better emotional stability, courtesy of the healing program.

World Mission club is one of the groups of youths that use expressive approaches like art, poems, theatre, music, writing among others in an attempt to heal the wounds. Their performances portray a number of different wounds and personal stories that came as a result of the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi. However, the performances also show a message of hope from these young people who have gotten an ear to listen to their pain and a family to call their own.

In March, the world mission club performed for a Swedish delegation, a piece that was not only thrilling but also an appreciation on the efforts of healing in the communities that Never Again Rwanda is operating in. Participants showcased a theatre piece that incorporated music and narration as a way of sharing their individual stories and to allow the greater community around them as a whole to understand trauma and healing through drama.

The young people in the club are using their

personal wounds to champion for healing and peace building. They said that all the performances are hinged on what they have gone through, what they have witnessed through their relatives and how they have been able to talk about it and start their journey to healing.

In her closing remarks, Hanna Doller the second Secretary at the Embassy of Sweden in Kigali lauded the World Mission Space for Peace club, for their emotive and powerful performance. She commended them and encouraged them to continue being a great representation of the journey to healing in their expressive arts, drama and music pieces. *“It's when you start talking about what happened that you start reconciling with it and moving ahead and eventually fostering peace and societal healing”* she said. She added that youth are an important factor in building lasting peace.

Youth are urged to use what they have, like talents and various skills to express their pain, but also build to lasting peace and healing. **PI**



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Members of the Swedish delegation learning more about Never Again Rwanda's work.

In our next edition

May, 2018

Peace Insight

Never Again Rwanda Newsletter

About Never Again

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2 Family Success Stories:
Read some of our change stories that have taken place in the family home.

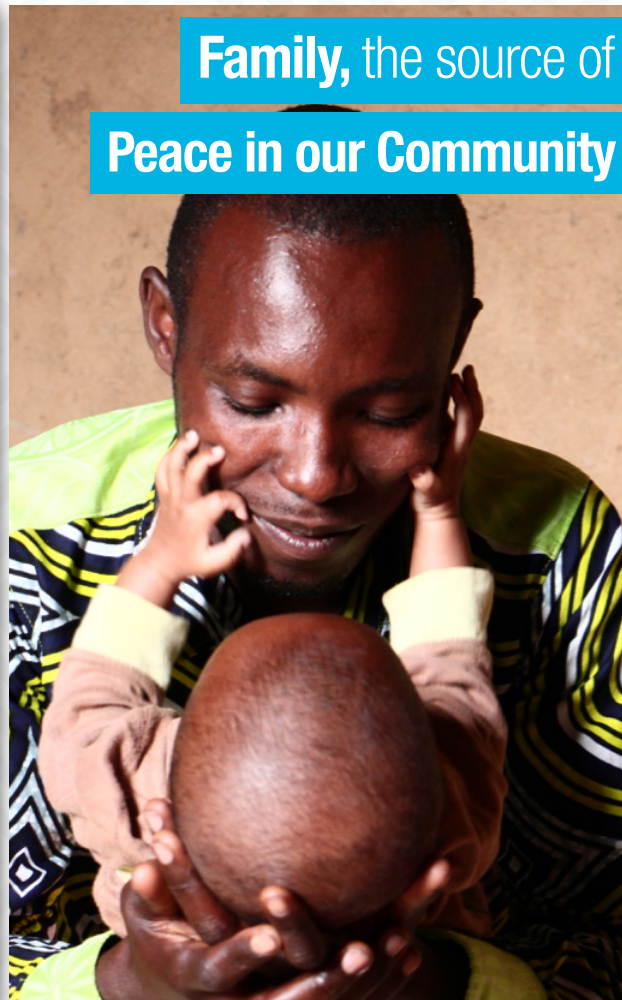
4 Public Speaking:
NAR hosts latest Local Public Speaking & Exchange for Schools.

8 Conference on Democracy:
The African Democracy Forum hosts conference on its advancement.

never
again

— Rwanda —

Family, the source of Peace in our Community



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