

PeaceInsight

Never Again Rwanda Newsletter [January 2018]



Read Q&A with Eric Mahoro on Page 2

Taking stock of the past year



looking towards 2018

THE YEAR IN PICTURES: Amina Umuhoza addressing IYD [top left]. A PBI participant from the USA, [top center]. Young performer during the international Day of Peace [top right]. Participants during the Regional PBI. [center right]. NAR's Nduba Space for Peace receive Swedish Ambassador Jenny Ohlsson [above]. **[Photos: Never Again Rwanda]**

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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Appreciation:

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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.

INTERVIEW:

2017-18

Taking stock of 2017 and looking into the New Year



While NAR recorded a number of successes, it also envisages a more interesting future. PeaceInsight's **Alexander Rijpma** talked to **Eric Mahoro** the Director of Programs about future prospects.

Reviewing 2017, what were NAR's achievements in relation to its objectives?

In 2017, the Societal Healing and Participatory Governance program was a highlight because of the numerous Spaces for Peace that took place. Most of them had started two years ago and in 2017 we recorded some increase of trust demonstrated through the collaboration of organized community activities. We had about four community exchange meetings, which were organized together with local officials across communities where Spaces for Peace operate and also where they invited local community members to participate.

Is there anything thing to report back to stakeholders about these 'spaces'?

Normally these spaces are closed because the members support each other to express themselves about their sensitive past. However, the fact that they've been able to open up is an addition because they could demonstrate the journey that they have gone through and share this with the rest

of the community to help them understand what they have been up to and to call upon them to increase their support towards those activities. So, from those exchange meetings we learnt a lot about other existing opportunities in the community, which will be leveraged on to increase our interventions within the community healing.

How do you review the governance pillar?

We have continued to run citizen forums in several districts across Rwanda. There are 13 spaces discussing governance issues affecting local communities. This is done to build the capacity of citizens to analyse governance, decision-making and policy-making so that they can provide more meaningful input to their leaders. Of course, with the decentralisation policy and Vision 2020, the government of Rwanda has put a focus on decentralising power but also in citizen participation. If you look at the decentralisation policy, it provides opportunities for citizens to participate, however there are still gaps in terms of how to provide this in terms of implementation and this is where NAR is chipping in to give

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Eric Mahoro facilitates a session on 'Regional Stereotypes' during the 2017 Regional Peacebuilding Institute.

“... we believe that the citizen forums are unique and can lead to a more open dialogue that tackles issues and helps decision makers to analyse what is being done.”
- Eric Mahoro

support.

In 2017 we saw many districts increasing consultations in the Imihigo process, for instance, to seek input of the citizen forum members.

Speaking of other pillars what do you think was the highlight of 2017?

NAR saw its education and sustainable livelihood pillars grow and, right now, we are partnering with the Rwanda Education Board and USAID through an intervention called 'Soma Umenye' to try and increase literacy amongst children in all schools of Rwanda through a writing competition called 'Andika Rwanda'. We hope that through participating in this writing competition, children and students will not

only learn to read and write, but can also start tapping into these values to write stories that are relevant to our context and which can help our counterparts to learn from the very local authors. For a long time, we relied on textbooks, stories and poems written by foreign writers, but now we want to increase local authorship through this writing competition. We've seen this really taking shape and through this NAR has facilitated in all thirty districts in Rwanda.

Let's talk about NAR's outlook for the future, particularly in 2018. What do you want to achieve?

We want to build sustainability for these community associations that are dealing with healing, because we are reaching a level where they can invest into activities because theories have shown that the culminating point of a group that has gone through healing is taking action. We want to work with these groups to build their sustainability. We have seen the citizen forums increasing understanding and their capacity to analyse. We have seen them working together and we hope that their togetherness can enable them to continue to do whatever they have been doing, even with minimal support from NAR. We want to bring governance advisors into various districts so that they can collaborate with the district authorities to organize spaces for citizen consultation, but also to design innovations, which enable citizens to

increase their participation and take up the issues which are remaining.

In terms of peacebuilding (and you can refer to this politically) how do you see the larger Great Lakes region unfold in 2018?

We are partnering with Interpeace to implement the Great Lakes Peacebuilding Programme, which involves actors from Burundi and the DRC as well as Rwanda and aims to look at building spaces for dialogue among the citizens of those countries. So we have a number of cross-border dialogues for peace and these are prominent spaces aimed specifically at citizens at the borders of, for instance, Rwanda and the DRC or Rwanda and Burundi. We have been seeing that, beyond the political issues, citizens remain engaged to collaborate because; irrespective of any wall between us thousands of people still cross the border everyday seeking a living. NAR in 2018 will continue to invest itself in the Great Lakes programme. It will continue its partnership with Interpeace and its partners in those various countries but at the same time, bringing youth together from the DRC and Burundi and also from Uganda to interact about their role in peacebuilding through what we call the 'Public Speaking and Exchange Program', which is supported by the GIZ. This program happens yearly and consists of students coming together, forming teams and making speeches that reflect peace values and the role that can be played by young people in mitigating conflict in this region. **PI**



Alex Rijpma is a Communications Intern with Never Again Rwanda.



10 Highlights of Never Again's Intervention

- 1. 2017 Regional & Summer PBI [16th Feb & 5th June]**

Participants from the USA and East African region studied the case of Rwanda as a post-conflict society and graduated to join a network of future responsible leaders.
- 2. National Conference on Commemoration [4th April]**

Youth and actors in the peacebuilding field discussed practice of commemorating the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi.
- 3. Youth Innovation Awards [3rd May]**

9 Youth awarded with start up funds for their small businesses in accordance with NAR's emphasis on income-generating activities amongst the youth.
- 4. Swedish Embassy visit to Citizen Forum & Space for Peace [22nd May & 7th June]**

H.E Jenny Ohlsson and a delegation from the Swedish Embassy visit a CF in Mukamira and a Space for Peace in Nduba sector to hear stories of change.
- 5. International Day of Youth Conference [12th August]**

Youth Conference offered the opportunity to discuss ambitions in entrepreneurship and other topics positively or negatively influencing the youth.
- 6. University of Washington visit [22nd August]**

Professor and 2 PhD students from the University of Washington visit NAR to learn more about transitional justice and the role of the ICTR.
- 7. International Day of Peace Celebration [21st Sept]**

Over 400 youth attended exchange with parliamentarians in order to express their peacebuilding needs and initiatives.
- 8. Musanze Community Exchange [12th October]**

Space for Peace members in Musanze shared their individual healing experiences with members of their community in Musanze.
- 9. Peace Actor's Strategic meeting [30th November]**

Never Again Rwanda presented the psychosocial group therapy approach to peace actors for reflection and insight.
- 10. International Day of Human Rights [11th December]**

National conference on human rights analyzed human rights trends in Rwanda and progress made within these areas.



Citizen voices her opinion on the election process during a NAR community dialogue in Mbyo district.



Panel of peace actors at reflective meeting during International Peace Day.



Researchers from University of Washington in discussion with Dr. Joseph Nkurunziza on collaboration.

By Alex Rijpma

The regional Peacebuilding Institute (PBI) is incoming yet again this year beginning on the 12th of February. The Institute is an opportunity for students and young professionals from across the region [Rwanda, Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Burundi, South Sudan and Sudan] to come together to learn about Rwanda's history, as well as to engage in a series of activities, discussions, and learn about post-conflict development approaches.

PBI is a bi-annual program bringing together youth and young professionals. According to Debby Karemera, PBI's coordinator, "For two weeks participants will undertake a study of a variety of themes linked to post-conflict reconstruction. Some of the themes include genocide history and prevention, transitional justice, and good governance and development."

New addition to the 2018 program

This year, there will be a few additions and improvements to the standard program from previous years. There will be a new topic of study focusing on women, peace and security. This addition was made in part, because previous students were curious about the role of women in Rwandan society and specifically the Rwandan parliament, which is renowned for the fact that its seats are comprised of a 64 per cent women majority.

The second major change is an increased focus on conflict management and resolution. Karemera says, "We had very minimal time for that section but participants wanted to expand on that. How are you able to know when there is a conflict or when it is time to act upon this conflict? How are you able to take note of early signs of conflict? They want to get all of this information".

Emphasis on home-grown solutions

The vital aspect of critical thinking will also be introduced into the program, as well as more emphasis on home-grown solutions. The main goal, Karemera explains, is that it is for youth that attend the PBI to be able to get skills and knowledge on facilitation

PEACEBUILDING:

What to expect from the '2018 Regional PBI'

of dialogue, especially in terms of conflict prevention.

The regional PBI specifically deals with teaching participants to "actively contribute to addressing the conflict in their communities, of course starting on a small-scale level, and how they can develop initiatives that can bring more people on board to be able to get involved in the process.

Networking

This leads directly into another aspect of the PBI that can be very useful for the future of many participants, namely networking, something that is very much encouraged.

Karemera explains that once participants get information from here, they form small groups that they use to train or conduct small workshops. Then they are able to see what they can do once they have a whole group of individuals.

"We want them to build networks, like an alumni network so that it is not only NAR that is able to bring them together but they are able to work and collaborate in doing coordinated work together," she says.

One example is from a participant from Uganda who started a leadership academy

with three other individuals who he met through the PBI in Rwanda.

"The more PBI's that happen then the more they can grow and the more they can engage broadly in more activities that bring out their active participation", says Karemera.

Networking and contacts are not the only opportunities that participants have been able to get as a consequence of taking part in this program.

"We have had three individuals who got scholarships because of the knowledge they gained through the PBI," Karemera says. Simply put, what the PBI offers to participants is both practical experience and contacts for the future as well as a truly enriching experience.

"For someone to be able to build or promote peace in their country, they have to have a positive outlook towards things and not be the kind of person who labels or stereotypes," she says.

Ultimately it is for this reason that the PBI exists, and starting next month, a new group of students and young professionals from across the region will come together to help make this goal a reality. **PI**





Christian Garuka, a lawyer, and Beline Uwineza of Transparency International Rwanda, address the audience during their panel discussion..

“Rwanda has made great effort to domesticate human rights” - Experts



By Peter Ndahiro

The writer is a Communication Executive with Never Again Rwanda. For feedback, please reach him at: peterndahiro@neveragainrwanda.

Last year’s celebration marked 70 years since the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly, on the 10th of December 1948, as resolution 217 in Paris, France.

Although this historic moment can seem like something that does not concern the local citizens in different corners of the globe, commemorations of the declaration continue to be observed all over the world, due to its role in assuring nations teach and educate to promote respect for rights and freedoms using progressive measures.

Never Again Rwanda has been commemorating the International Day of Human Rights through national conferences since 2012 under various themes of discussion. This year’s national conference which took place on the 11th of December 2017, invited civil society; members of parliament, NAR affiliated youth clubs, and development partners, to

deliberate under the theme of “Stand up for Equality, Justice and Human Dignity”.

The acting USAID mission director Leslie Marbury expressed her delight to reflect upon the tireless framework that is the Universal Declaration of Human Rights with Never Again Rwanda.

“It is a great time to reflect on this tireless framework, for proclaiming the rights that all human beings are entitled to regardless of their gender, race, status or religion. USAID and the US government stands with institutions like Never Again Rwanda, in standing with those who struggle with the realization and protection of their human rights.”

The national conference kicked off by analyzing human rights trends in Rwanda, its achievements, challenges and priorities. Andrews Kananga, of Legal Aid Forum, noted that causes of genocide linked to inequalities that existed in society.

“We saw people not getting education, no

access to justice, and massive human rights violations. The existence of inequalities in our society is one of the reasons we experienced genocide.”

Mary Barikungeri of Rwanda Women’s network, addressed the achievements and challenges towards gender equality in Rwanda. She answered a question on women’s rights and participation in Rwanda, whether the 64% woman representation in parliament reflected progress in the human rights area.

“When women get to a certain level, people always question their participation. But if it were men then they would not question it. We are in a context that truly embraces equality, but we need to interrogate how we as a society perceive it.”

Linking back to the universal declaration which drives the significance of this day, Me Laurent Nkongori affirmed that the universal declaration has been totally domesticated by Rwanda, and that the Rwandan Ministry of Justice has made great efforts to domesticate human rights within society, especially the notion of human dignity.

“Rwanda and the Ministry of Justice have made a lot of efforts to domesticate. It is always necessary to put those international conventions into our legislation, and to adapt them. They have been voted somewhere outside the country, so we have to adapt them to our context.”

An attentive audience posed questions to the two expert panels. A young member of the audience asked the first panel who should be responsible for teaching citizens about their rights, while another member of the audience posed a question concerning striking a balance between women representing their political parties, but also representing the empowerment of women in politics and proper representation.

Dr. Joseph noted that “It is our responsibility as civil society, to ensure that citizens know and understand their rights. When we started the ‘Inzira Nziza’ project, we realized that the young people don’t understand their rights and they don’t even understand what the constitution says, even those who voted for it during the referendum.”

Some of the recommendations that

“ In order to fulfill the ‘no one left behind’ agenda, we need to bring women on board and get strategies on how to bring even more women on board.

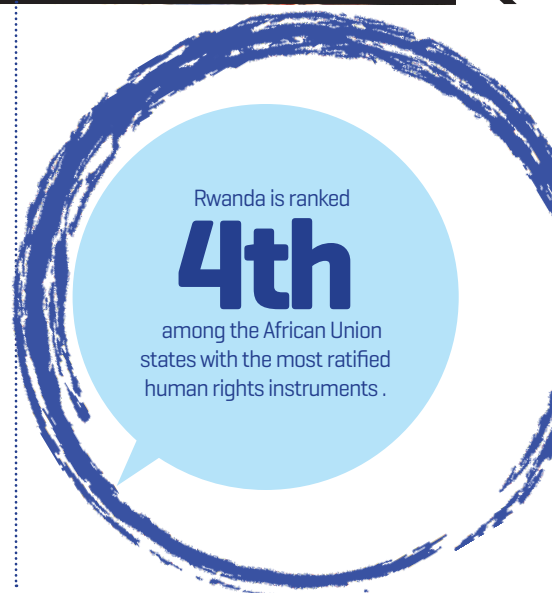
- Mary Barikungeri
Rwanda Women’s Network



Mary Barikungeri of Rwanda Women’s Network making a point during the discussions.

came out of the national conference, included making it a necessity to educate Rwandans on their rights as per the law and the application of those rights, translating laws into local languages in order to allow citizens to know and understand them, and also drawing up data on the current trends in order to attract government partnerships.

Dr. Joseph Nkurunziza closed the national conference emphasizing that the key words that have come out of the deliberations are “MONITOR, ADVOCATE, SENSITIZE and INSPECT.” These key words can guide Never Again Rwanda and other stakeholders in the human rights arena, in creating the environment for continued consolidation of human rights principles in society. **PI**





By Noel Ntahobari

The writer is a Research Consultant with Never Again Rwanda.

RESEARCH & ADVOCACY:

Understanding NAR's research on 'Imihigo'

Consistent with its strategic plan for the period 2017-2021, and in particular its strategic 2nd and 3rd pillars which include 'Governance and Rights' and 'Research and Advocacy' respectively, Never Again Rwanda [NAR] strives to establish itself as a respected and influential non-government think-tank in Rwanda and beyond.

To achieve this, the institution has institutionalized regular social research on a range of cross-cutting topics in the field of governance. This is done as a means to generate useful advocacy evidence to inform citizen-centered governance practice and also support policy processes as backbones of a lasting peace.

Since May 2017, NAR has embarked on a purely qualitative study titled "Citizen Participation in Local Imihigo Process". This study aims at critically identifying the root causes of persisting low citizen participation in local imihigo and recommend alternative policy solutions. This will involve assessing direct and indirect participation of citizens, investigation of key success factors and challenges to citizen participation.

With originally limited funding from 'Ikiraro cy'Iterambere Programme' which is supported by DFID and managed by Palladium Group, the study was initially supposed to cover five districts of Rwanda that include Huye, Kayonza, Musanze, Karongi and Gasabo.

Upon recommendation of the Rwanda Governance Board [RGB] and mainly for purposes of ensuring a countrywide generalizability of prospective findings, NAR opted to expand the study to 10 more districts adding Nyaruguru, Nyagatare, Rutsiro, Nyabihu, Burera, Gakenke, Rulindo, Nyamagabe, Nyaruguru and Gatsibo. The



NAR researchers interview a key informant during the Imihigo data collection.

“ This study aims to critically identify the root causes of persisting low citizen participation in local imihigo and recommend alternative policy solutions.

- Noel Ntahobari

expansion of the geographical coverage of this study was made possible through additional funding which was availed by the Norwegian People's Aid [NPA] through PPIMA [Public Policy Information, Monitoring and Advocacy] and Ikiraro cy'Iterambere in late September 2017 respectively. With the advent of PPIMA as a funding partner, the responsibility for study implementation was expanded to also include AJPRODHO-JIJUKIRWA, a PPIMA coalition member which has, in the past, conducted research on governance related topics.

Following the expansion of the geographical coverage of the study, the original research design was accordingly revisited to best reflect various stakeholders' interests and it was subsequently approved by the Rwanda Governance Board [RGB], a government body mandated to oversee research in the governance sector. A research clearance was thereafter sought and obtained from the Institute of National Statistics of Rwanda [NSIR], hence laying fertile grounds for real research execution to commence. It is in this regard that, on

IMIHIKO FACT SHEET

Since 2010, several studies (RGB 2012, 2014, 2016 & NAR 2015 and IRDP 2010, 2012) have consistently pointed to low citizen participation in local government Imihigo and budgeting processes.

The net satisfaction of citizen participation in local Imihigo and budgeting amounted to 34.61% and 27.49% respectively (RGB 2012:31) in the 2012-2013 fiscal year (FY). Interestingly, their participation in Imihigo has increased to 72.2% in the 2013-2014 FY (RGB 2014:37) to drop down again to 27.30% in the 2014-2015 FY (RGB 2016:32; RGB 2015:56).

Likewise, citizen participation in local budgeting dropped from 28.9% in the 2013-2014 FY to 27.30% in the 2014-2015 FY (RGB 2016:32). Interestingly, net satisfaction of citizen participation in local imihigo elaboration has drastically increased to 41.1% in the 2015-2016 fiscal year (RGB 2016:81).

Past researches failed to answer why citizen participation in both local government imihigo and budgeting processes has throughout been reported low.



Citizens contributing their thoughts during NAR's Imihigo research.

22nd September, 2017, a multi-stakeholder validation workshop of the research inception report with a focus on research design, methodology and data collection instruments was conducted at Highland Hotel in Kigali. The workshop which brought together governance practitioners from government and non-government spheres as well as governance scholars, served as an invaluable quality assurance framework in the sense it helped NAR and AJPRODHO to meaningfully improve on the quality of the inception report and to validate it.

Inputs received from stakeholders' during the inception report validation workshop paved a way to field piloting of data collection instruments in Gikomero Sector of Gasabo District on 13th October, 2017.

Feedback from the pilot phase enabled NAR and AJPRODHO to accordingly revise the validated data collection instruments, hence maximizing on the clarity, precision and relevance of questions to be put onto research participants. Fieldwork consisting in running targeted focus group discussions

and key informant interviews started from 20th October and went on until the second week of December 2017.

In accordance with the research execution roadmap agreed upon with the research funders, plans for in-depth data analysis and findings reporting covered the third week of December 2017 and will go on through February 2018. The final findings report could be expected by March 2018, time to allow for strategic engagement of various stakeholders on preliminary findings. An extended validation workshop of the findings report will also run during this period and will serve as an opportunity to seek stakeholders' feedback on the extent to what their expectations from the research at hand were met. It is anticipated that the findings will serve as evidence to constructively engage public policy makers on desired improvements in the current practices of citizen participation in local decision-making processes particularly in Imihigo. [PI](#)



Panel of government practitioners contribute to validation workshop of the research inception report.

OPINION:

Bonny Mukombozi

Governance & Rights Program Coordinator

Building Peace in Youth;

Unlocking Legacies of Conflict

It has been twenty three years since the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi occurred but to many it seems like yesterday. It required tremendous efforts to restore hope, trust, unity and peace among Rwandans considering the atrocities they witnessed and lived through within one hundred days.

Every year from April 7th-13th Rwandans pay tribute to their loved ones who perished during the 1994 genocide, which for majority of survivors serves as a symbol of hope for the future generation and as a way to never forget memories of their loved ones. During this period various acts of solidarity are organized to comfort survivors to cope with painful memories of their past which still continue to haunt some.

Rwanda's case served as a wakeup call to the world at large to act upon early warning signs of violence to avoid

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If youth who were born in post genocide Rwanda are not educated about their past they are likely to become manipulated into committing acts of violence.

- Bonny Mukombozi

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future genocides and conflicts from ever recurring again. It is against this background that Never Again Rwanda [NAR] places particular emphasis on promoting peace especially among youth and the community at large. This year's 23rd remembrance that took place on April 4th on the theme "the importance of memorialisation in healing and fighting against genocide ideology" was an opportunity for youth to share their thoughts on the significance of commemoration for those who survived the genocide and those born in post genocide Rwanda.

During a dialogue session with one of the community groups in Gasabo district, Nduba sector a female genocide survivor stated; "During the commemoration period I recall the suffering I went through but I also acknowledge the fact that I survived of which at the time seemed impossible to me, my life changed when I joined this group [space for peace], I learnt to live peacefully with those who wronged me and in the process I vow to make good use of the remaining days I have on this earth".

If youth who were born in post genocide Rwanda are not educated about their past they are likely to become manipulated into committing acts of violence. However youth don't only need to be educated about their past they also need to be provided with platforms to discuss emerging challenges such as genocide ideology, stereotypes, labeling and wounding language used in their surrounding environment.

Throughout the month of April, NAR spaces for peace and citizen forums will engage in discussions on the theme "the importance of memorialisation in healing and fighting against genocide ideology". This will be an opportunity for NAR beneficiaries to reflect on their past but also address some of the challenges related to genocide ideology with specific emphasis on issues affecting youth and those affecting adults [community members/citizens]. [PI](#)

By Paul Muhozi

In order to strengthen citizen participation in a democratic country, citizens should be at the forefront of decision-making. Fatuma Ndagiza, Former Deputy CEO of the Rwanda Governance Board at the launch ceremony of the NAR initiated Citizens' Forum in Karongi District, said: "It is better to consult citizens before planning governance programs"

By learning from experience in many democratic countries around the world citizens have always been educated so that they can know the importance of their participation. But still, in most African countries, it has been noted that citizens participate mainly in the implementation of the programs; in the elections of leaders, volunteering during elections and Contesting elections; while having low participation in the planning of programs, formulation of policies, laws or decision-making, and in the evaluation of government programs which gives privileges to ask for leaders accountability.

Citizen working together with decision makers

A well-known saying from Mahatma Gandhi says: "Everything you do for me without my participation is not for me". It is important to work together, share experiences and consult each other. NAR in partnership with Interpeace has created the citizens' forum in ten districts of Rwanda since July 2015, particularly in the districts of Karongi, Bugesera, Musanze, Gasabo, Huye, Gicumbi, Rwamagana, Nyarugenge, Nyabihu, and Nyaruguru. This has led to some experiences of citizen participation through these citizen forums.

Although the Rwandan government has adopted many approaches to promote citizen participation, including Akagoroba Kababyeyi and the Citizens Council, NAR has designed and applied this approach of citizen forums that has become an excellent opportunity to strengthen the links between citizens and decision-makers.



Citizens discuss community concerns during the launch of a Citizen Forum in Huye.

Experiences of citizen participation in governance programs through citizen forums

Citizen Forums transforming members into governance program facilitators and owners.

Where citizen forums have been launched, citizens and local leaders have become committed to working together, and citizens have committed to regularly reporting their issues and concerns to local leaders. In return, local leaders committed to consulting with citizens, but they did not know that this would later create a greater sense of belonging among citizens within governance programs.

Illustrating how the citizen forum promoted governance program ownership, one of the CF facilitators in the Rutare sector introduced a new mechanism complementing government programs by forming citizen groups at village level. They do community work early in the morning before going to work at the village level, digging terraces for fellow citizen's farms to fight against erosions. Now, many citizens' fields are erosions free, the harvest is secured through this initiative after local leaders saw the results contributing to the sector's performance contract [Imihigo].

Hearing stories like these shows us how based on context participatory governance is. That these initiatives can be replicated from one situation to another. Lessons learned can be used as local decision-making solutions that are more practical for citizens.

Dr. Joseph Ryarasa, Executive Director

of Never Again Rwanda, on the occasion of the International Day of Democracy on September 15, 2017, commented that the perception of a true democracy is seen at the level of citizen participation: "Democracy begins at home. Even children know how to work and claim their rights. The world has become a village. It is very easy to share success stories between different nations because democratic values are universal, the only difference is in the implementation which depends on the cultural and historical context. There is no excuse, people must learn from each other's success stories and learn from lessons learned for their own personal development." **PI**



The writer is a Governance & Rights Program Officer with Never Again Rwanda.



SUCCESS STORIES

From Karongi district Citizen Forums

Because of the 'Citizen Forums' I am an advisor in my village.

Through the Citizen Forum, we have been able to get linked to different areas of Bwishyura Sector so that we can share ideas. I was destined to educate my children at home but since I joined this group it led me to know more, which made me an advisor in our village.

For example Ubudehe money is designed for the vulnerable, but sometimes the village leader is offering it to his relative or friends. At the time this case happened, I humbly approached officials in my village and told them giving that money to friends or relatives is wrong, because government assistance is for vulnerable people and it is their right to get it.

I am now a link between citizens and the leaders – especially when it comes to the vulnerable – and while linking these two, we don't issue commands but we use the "convince to change" speech. NAR shook me up and gave me different responsibilities. Now whenever someone speaks about his or her problem, I just want to help even if he or she cannot approach me.

Josephine (Karongi District Citizens' Forum)
Age: 44



A group of citizens share experiences during a citizen forum in Gicumbi district.



The citizen forum gave us integrity in our community as well as self-confidence.

These forums compelled service provider to deliver better services.

Before joining the Citizen Forum, I was a greedy and morally corrupt woman who lived only for herself. I would go to the hospital and pass others because I was familiar to the receptionists.

Ever since I joined the Citizen Forum, I became selfless and started standing up for others. People would get sick and go to traditional healers instead of the health centre due to the bad service. NAR organized a meeting with leaders where we raised this problem, and now services are delivered effectively and efficiently at Kibuye Hospital. Some people had no compost, they used to deposit waste in bushes. I approached the Village Chairman, and he also took it to the cell level so

that they can provide us with a public wastes ground and now that ground is available.

I also helped people who had a problem paying land taxes yet their land was used in Ubudehe road construction. I approached the person in charge and told him about that issue and he told me to inform those people that they have to bring their land certificates to the sector. This problem has not yet been solved because some people have not yet taken their certificates back, but those who brought their certificates were helped.

Catherine (Karongi District Citizens Forum)
Age: 43

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Leadership was not clear for me but ever since I joined the citizen forum, I understand good leadership values.

In our Citizen Forum, we share ideas about health services and leadership services. People are now up to date about their rights. There was a sector council meeting after realized the role of the Citizen Forum in our sector. The Citizen Forum pushed me to become a member of youth representatives due to the skills and confidence I got from it. The citizen forum made me someone else, because before I could not attend any meeting (even Umuganda) but now I have realized that as youth I can contribute to the development of the country more than my elders. Now I am a peer educator of my fellows as well as my community.

Speaking about the facts of our realities with confidence has made me a link between leaders and the population, because people take me as someone who can stand for them.

NTWARI (Male participant)
Karongi District Citizens' Forum
Age: 30

The Citizen Forum has taught me to appreciate human rights.

Before joining this citizen forum, I thought that a leader helps a person if he or she wants to, but now this group has taught me about human rights in all kinds of aspects of life: politics, education, health, agriculture, and religion.

Before, I was not interested in helping others, but through the citizen forum I am able to work with others and stand up for them whenever possible.

Participation in Umuganda was too low before the forum campaigned for innovating its working plan. People would not even consider it as public work but as a job for leaders. NAR organized a sensitizing walk where it was every member's duty to move among his or her village while sensitizing people about Umuganda program and it was very successful.

This was a big pleasure and a great result for us. I am now a speaker and MC due to the skills I got from the citizen forum.

Marie
Gender: Female
Age: 68

 This group has taught me about human rights in all kinds of aspects of life: politics, education, health, agriculture, and religion.

Citizens now trust me because I represent and relay their issues to leaders.

I have been a member of different cooperatives but ever since I heard about the Citizen Forum and became a member, I really learnt more. It helped me to get more information about all cells in the Bwishyura Sector. People trust me based on how I represent them and expose their issues to leaders. We are like advisors of leaders due to how we directly collaborate with population, sharing ideas and helping them and solve their problems. This made us trusted in our society.

Example: There was no way for citizens in our sector to know the projects planned for them and where to express their ideas. Our team decided to create a suggestion box at the sector office. The citizens then had a way to give their ideas, especially those who are shy to talk in public. This was a solution for the leaders, because they checked out those ideas and found out perfect solution.

This makes the authorities trust the citizen forum in Bwishyura based on how it intervenes in the government's activities. The citizen forum helped me learn more things regarding the needs of citizens. It helped me to trust myself and to be open to my family. Based on how we help in the daily life of our neighbours, the NAR team has become a solution to all. In our village, my neighbours considered me a link between them and the local authorities.

Simeon
Karongi Citizen Forum
Age: 70

Disclaimer: In order to protect the identity of the contributors only first names of participants have been used.

GUEST WRITER:

By Eric Birori

Amongst the older generation, 'Digital Media' has two major perceptions. One as a means for young people to become influencers and share information from all corners of the globe instantly, whilst the second perception maintains a view that the digital age has put young people within touching distance of things that can have a profound negative impact upon them.

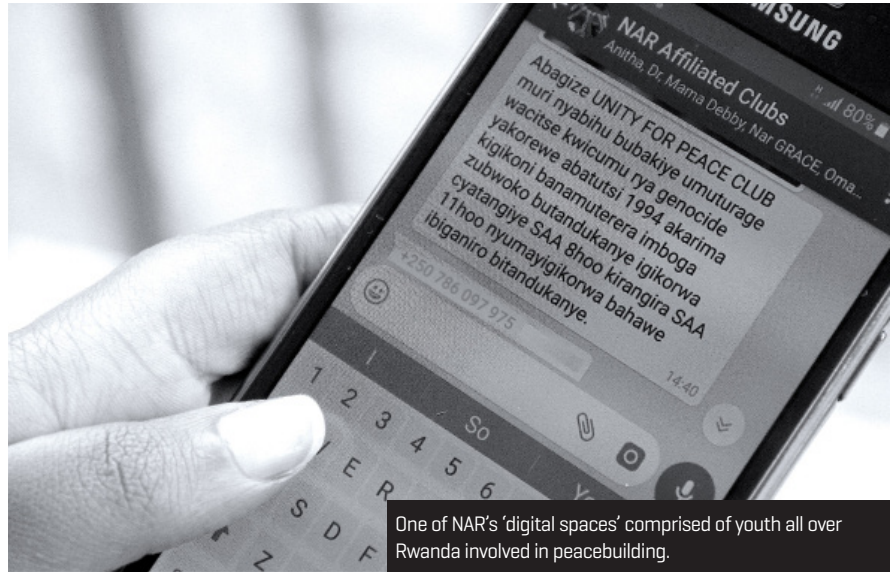
Although social networks have been identified to be majorly responsible for a litany of social ills, the government of Rwanda is targeting to reach 100 per cent internet usage by 2020. From the current 38 per cent; the number of televisions and news websites is growing, and exposing young people to a host of new trends, as well as various social media platforms and multicultural characteristics that influence their lifestyle.

The challenge for the elder generation therefore, is to recognize young people's relationship with globalization, and establish the right means of facilitating that with their development as young men and women. Most policy makers overlook this, and dismiss what they refer to as misconduct, which can in turn make said policy makers reject youth and keep them out of decision making processes.

In Rwanda, it is very hard to identify the psychological aspects of our complex society for many reasons, including the remaining psychological wounds of genocide. Taking into consideration the fact that many Rwandans have been refugees in different countries, coupled with the speed of progress that has been achieved in only two decades, it can be tricky for young Rwandans to maintain their culture and identity in the digital age.

Young people don't want to hear that there is an epidemic which is targeting them, because they believe a generational misunderstanding has always existed and that the older generation has always gotten it wrong when describing young people's behavior.

The country's leadership however, continues to empower young people and



One of NAR's 'digital spaces' comprised of youth all over Rwanda involved in peacebuilding.

Maintaining cultural values in the 'Digital Age'

establish different initiatives that build in Rwandan youth, a spirit of patriotism and self-reliance while also becoming key actors in portraying the country's positive image abroad and online.

Different initiatives have been established by the Government of Rwanda to teach young people about cultural values, the history of Rwanda, as well as being informed about shared values and taboos which work to preserve the culture.

Never Again Rwanda is empowering young people with opportunities to become active citizens by teaching skills pertaining to human rights, democracy, youth participation and critical thinking,

expecting that they will use those skills to analyze different situations around them and celebrate their diversities.

Despite the fact that different actions are being undertaken, the contact of our culture with others has increasingly impacted Rwandan culture and values, which is evident in the misuse of technology, clothing, and language.

Youth should be empowered to develop a sense of belonging and to make sense of how global affairs and events impact them. They should also be engaged in decision making processes that will enable them make sense of the world in which they are living. **PI**

“The fact that many Rwandans have been refugees in different countries, coupled with the speed of progress that has been achieved in only two decades, it can be tricky to maintain culture and identity in the digital age.”
- Eric Birori

OPINION:

Performance art as a tool for ‘Building Peace’

By Omar Ndizeye

Youth as dynamic members of any society are interested in discovering new ideas and use of expressive approaches in their routine work. Considering youth as today’s and future peace actors in our society, Never Again Rwanda (NAR) as an organization that rose in the aftermath of the Genocide against the Tutsi in 1994 has been organizing conferences, debates, participatory theater, workshops, arts competitions to engage young people in expressing their concerns, psychological wounding experiences from their past, to learn about their past, and empowering them with critical thinking capacity to analyze roots causes of the conflicts and deconstruct any possible negative stereotypes in their communities.

Starting this year, Never Again Rwanda within its societal healing axis has made a specific focus on youth artistic productions by organizing a competition of songs, drawings as well as poetry under the theme Youth Building Peace: “The role of youth in building a peaceful community”. Since the launch of this arts competition, NAR had received 193 applications from individuals and groups both schooling and non-schooling, located in 10 districts of NAR’s operation. These include: Nyarugenge, Kicukiro, Gasabo, Nyagatare, Rwamagana, Bugesera, Kayonza, Musanze, Gicumbi, Huye, Gisagara, Nyamagabe, Nyaruguru, Rubavu and Ngororero District. At the start of February 2018, NAR will select 3 winners per province among those who applied to compete at the national level. This time, the best 3 art productions in each of those categories will be chosen to be awarded for the best performance as well as the most inspiring art work. Besides these awards NAR is expecting to promote the talented



A member of ‘Isoko Arts’ performing during the International Day of Youth.


young people through different NAR’s media platforms.

Maybe by reading this article, you ask yourself what is the expected impact of this particular activity? Maybe you are wondering what it will contribute to the process of transforming the Rwandan society into a healed and peaceful society? Well, as the famous artist Michelangelo

“ This art component will also facilitate youth to visualize what is in their minds, informing our society about youth issues and solutions toward peace ”

- Omar Ndizeye

said, “An artist must have his measuring tools not in the hand, but in the eye”. This art component will also facilitate youth to visualize what is in their minds, informing our society about youth issues and solutions toward peace as well as enabling intellect exchange among young members of our society.

By organizing this competition, NAR also expects to be platform where youth of diverse backgrounds can through their art work, share their personal stories in artistic ways which promotes tolerance of diverse opinions, empathy, as well trust among the members of our society. One cannot doubt how this expressive approach will also contribute to our societal healing and social cohesion, by allowing young people to express themselves. Some of their past experiences reflected within their work can also inspire others to do the same. This can be a tool for them to express themselves but also on the other hand a tool of inspiration for the young people of Rwanda to continue towards building a sustainable developed and peaceful society. 

Shaping cross-border peace through dialogue, advocacy and research

Read full version on: www.neveragainrwanda.org

By Reverien Interayamahanga

The regional programme known as 'Trans-border dialogue for peace in the Great Lakes Region' is implemented by Interpeace in partnership with six local organisations based in Rwanda [Never Again Rwanda], Burundi and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

The programme operates with three boundary partners including community members [youth, men and women], decision-makers and regional institutions through four major strategies. These include participatory-action research, dialogue and advocacy and collaboration with CSOs to expand the engagement of actors. After a phase I that ran from 2013 to 2018, the programme embarked on Phase II, operational from January 2017 to 2020.

For the year 2017, major activities of the programme consisted in ordinary dialogue sessions with cross-border dialogue spaces [GDPs], community forums organised around issues that emerged from GDP sessions, advocacy meetings with decision-makers around the same issues, and research on resilience for reconciliation.

Regarding the dialogue, 14 dialogue sessions were held within 4 GDPs co-facilitated by NAR and other stakeholders. A total of 313 people including 172 men and 141 women attended the sessions. They include Rubavu-Goma, Kamembe-Bukavu, Bugarama-Kamanyola-Cibitoke and Bugesera-Kirundo. The initial sessions aimed at drawing up annual plans for GDPs, while others consisted in operationalizing those plans. Thanks to the said sessions, a couple of community forums and advocacy meetings with decision-makers were planned and carried out.

During the same year, GDPs with the support of partner organisations organized community forums to engage community members involved in cross-border activities with regular border-users from local communities in discussions on major challenges faced from a cross-border perspective and propose solutions. In this regard, 5 community forums were carried out, 2 of which in Goma, 1 in Rubavu, 1 in Rusizi and 1 in Bugesera.

The community forums in the form of focus group discussions [FGDs] were organized in Rubavu and Rusizi on 14th and 28th June respectively, and aimed at identifying and analysing major issues faced by people involved in cross-border trade and movement via Poids Lourds, Rusizi II & III border posts, respectively. On the former border post, the FGD brought together 27 people including 12 male and 15 female. The participants highlighted issues such as: multiple taxes paid on the Congolese side and without any receipts; the presence of several but unidentified Congolese officials [with neither name nor uniform] who collect taxes without any receipts; and "human tax", worth 500 Congolese francs per person, standing for the visa fee, while this fee is imposed nowhere else on Rwanda/Congolese border.

The community forums in the form of FGDs were organized in Rubavu and Rusizi aimed at identifying and analysing major issues on cross-borders

- Reverien Interayamahanga

In addition, as a result of an issue raised and discussed within Bugesera/Kirundo GDP, another community forum was organized on 22nd September 2017, in Rweru Sector [a sector neighboring with Burundi], Bugesera District. It aimed at identifying and analysing issues faced by Rweru residents as a result of the political and security crisis in Burundi. Participants were 27 community members including 16 men and 11 women. Issues raised and discussed include among others: cases of cows theft by individuals from Burundi; the cross-border trade [mainly of fruits] that was frozen, which impacted negatively the livelihoods of those involved in that trade, especially women; the freeze of cross-border movement, especially Rwandans who cannot safely travel to Burundi.

With regard to the FGD in Rubavu, it brought together 8 people including 3 male and 5 female. A couple of issues were identified and analysed including: long queues on the rwandan side while some border-users carry heavy loads/goods, while other goods are often carried by porters, with the risk of losing them eventually; high taxation of some products by the rwandan customs; multiple taxes paid on the Congolese side and without any receipts; presence of several but unidentified Congolese officials [neither name nor uniform] who collect taxes without any receipts; and absence of approved taxation tariffs of products/goods, which makes the whole taxation system subjective and corrupt. **PI**

Full version available at www.neveragainrwanda.org.

The writer is the Coordinator of the Great Lakes Program at Never Again Rwanda.

