

PeaceInsight

Never Again Rwanda Newsletter

Why youth should contribute to Peacebuilding in their communities

About Never Again

A peace building and social justice organization that arose in response to the 1994 Genocide perpetrated 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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International Youth Day celebrations

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– Rwanda –



Youth participants follow the proceedings at the International Peace Day. [PHOTO © David Kezio-Musoke]



Panel of peace actors at reflective meeting during International Peace Day. [PHOTO © David Kezio-Musoke]



By **Kezio-Musoke David**

The writer is a Communication Specialist with Never Again Rwanda.

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NAR's Director of Programs Eric Mahoro during the panel discussion. [Photo @David Kezio-Musoke]

Pace has become elusive in a world plagued by youth restiveness. Globally, some youth from various regions have become discordant encouraging and promoting divisive tendencies. History has taught us that this kind of trend is a wind that blows no man any good.

Rwandan youth hosted by Never Again Rwanda converged recently on the International Youth day (IYD) in Kigali to deliberate on the notion of peace. Dominique Alonga Uwase, founder of 'Imagine We Rwanda', a publishing house dedicated to projecting African stories, is one of them. Her philosophy is that once youthful Rwandans develop a deeper reading culture they would acquire more knowledge needed in 'peacebuilding'.

"When youths were told to pick up pangas during the 1994 Genocide [against the Tutsi], they did it without thinking because they did not have knowledge. A person with 'Critical Thinking' skills would probably have asked, 'why should I do that?'"

Derrick Murekezi, the founder of 'Critical Thinking for Peace', an NGO that promotes peace through creative thinking and sensitization, believes that young people MUST have the ability to envisage the future. According to him the current millennial generation should pave peaceful ways for the next to promote healing and must have the skills to do that. Murekezi told this publication that young people should always ask themselves what they could do to contribute without distorting the foundation their forefathers laid. He also argues that a peaceful heritage can't be passed on from generation to generation without 'critical thinking' skills.

The two youth are what one can easily call

CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS:

Why youth should be included in the 'peacebuilding' processes

'peace-actors', and are role models in that arena. They were guest speakers at the IYD, which the peacebuilding institute dedicated to celebrating young people's contributions to peacebuilding and transformation.

The celebrations, which mainly enabled young people and different stakeholders to converge, couldn't have come at a better time. Looking at the demographics, globally youth are the largest in history, and they often comprise the majority in countries marked by post conflict or civil unrest.

In Rwanda alone, according to the Fourth Population and Housing Census, the youth constituted 40 percent of the resident population in 2012, numbering 4.1 million and the number has since grown.

“Some youth in the Great Lakes region are easily manipulated because they lack critical thinking skills.”

The Ministry of Youth, Culture, and Sports defines a Rwandan youth as someone between the age of 14 and 35 years. Like many developing countries, Rwanda's population as a whole is quite young, supporting the argument that 'critical thinking' is a much needed element to build a peaceful society.

From the IYD deliberations, young people agreed that to attain sustainable peace, governments must shift their condemnatory perspective of youths as violent people, or better still easy recruits for violence, to a more fulfilling role as agents of peacebuilding and NAR is successfully doing just that.

Establishing precisely 69 youth clubs and associations across 12 districts in Rwanda, NAR has given a platform to young people to become active peace agents. And those running the program are adopting the model of considering youth as the solution and not as the problem.

"We identify and address the social exclusion of young people as a hindrance to attaining sustaining peace. Experts believe that considering the needs and aspirations of youth in matters of peace and security is an imperative," said Omar Ndizeye, NAR Youth Coordinator. **PI**

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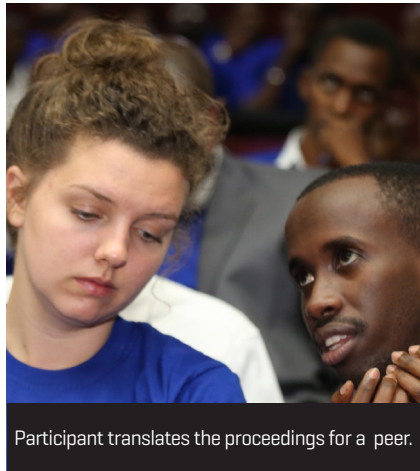
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Participant translates the proceedings for a peer.



Delegate following proceedings at International Peace Day celebrations.



Isoko Arts performing during International Peace Day celebrations.

Disclaimer:

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



All participants, officials and delegates pose for a group photo at the International Peace Day. [Photos by @David Kezio-Musoke]

By Mikhaila Cupido Musoni

Guest Writer

PEACE AND DEMOCRACY:

Analyzing the role of youth in democratizing Africa

In celebrating International Day of Democracy, being located in Africa, and having a mandate to serve the African people, we as the African Democracy Forum (ADF) focus on the progress of democracy on the continent. Remaining mindful of the reality that Africa's success is underpinned by the progress made with the implementation of democratic principles and values in every region.

With 200 million Africans falling into the youth demographic, Africa has an obligation towards its young people. In abiding by democratic values, we afford everyone equal opportunity and in that the platform is set for African youth to play their role. So what should this role be? In evaluating the African Union's African Youth Charter, African youth are expected to become custodians of their own development, and in taking ownership of their future, African leaders should afford them that opportunity.

More often than not Gerontocracy is associated with Africa – in that we have political leaders who stay on in some instances for what seems time immemorial. In Uganda President Yoweri Museveni has been in power for the last 31 years, so the youth demographic there have known the governing of only one man and one political party.

The

debate is ongoing as to whether or not the Constitution there will be amended allowing him to stand for re-election in 2021. But what does stand out about the debate has been the role of Civil Society taking to the streets in protest of this change, and the impact that this will have on Uganda. Civil Society comprises this youth demographic and they have been out in numbers, albeit that there has been much state opposition to their actions.

One thing is certain, Ugandans possess the tools with which to exercise their democratic right. And we hope that the government there will be mindful of this and recognize that governing is meeting the needs of the people that are governed and not to super impose yourself on a people.

In focusing on Uganda, youth should be mindful of their strength in numbers and the effects they can have on how they are governed and how a country is governed. As such, it is imperative that young people defend democracy, the rule of law, human rights and fundamental freedoms. Because Africa is in need of young people able to create opportunities for themselves. Opportunities that can uplift a people, a country, a continent to make due on the vision for the future. A future where Africa does not lag behind, where the newspaper reports aren't filled with what Africa is lacking but rather filled with how Africa has fortified itself. An Africa where other heads of state internationally do not conjure up names of non-existent African countries but take note of what Africa is doing and the beacon of hope that it is.

Democracy in Africa needs to be an action and not just something that we say we adhere to for the sake of saying. And in recognizing that democracy is universal, but that the dynamics are different for every country, we will find respect for the other and a realization that despite our differences we have the same goals in mind. Our failure to make self-determination accessible to all people in Africa will reverberate through the future and we will be held accountable. This makes International Day of Democracy so important as it is a time of stock taking for Africa, on how far we have come and how far we still have to go as a people and a continent in providing everyone access to the freedoms that they so rightfully deserve. **PI**

Mikhaila Cupido Musoni is the Coordinator for the African Democracy Forum.





Dr. Joseph Nkurunziza, NAR Executive Director, addresses participants of the International Day Of Democracy. [Photo @Sonia Tona]



Participant poses a question to the panel of experts. [Photo @Sonia Tona]



Youth participant gives a contribution during the International Day Of Democracy. [Photo @ Eric Birori]

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF DEMOCRACY:

By Peter Ndahiro

The African Democracy forum (ADF) in partnership with NAR organized a discussion to celebrate advances of democracy on the African continent. The activity gathered 32 participants; Civil society actors in Governance and Democracy, Academics, independent researchers, youth leaders and youth representatives of different institutions. The purpose was to encourage youth to play an influential role in the implementation of democracy in Africa. If they understand what it is, they can be involved, and make greater strides in democratization on the continent.



Panel of experts during International Day Of Democracy. [Photo @Eric Birori]

Youthful PeaceActors

Lycee De Kigali's Never Again Club

By **Grace Usanase**
Peacebuilding Program Officer

The Never Again club in Lycee de Kigali organized a 'Never Again Week' that ran under the theme of "critical thinking for peace".

During this week, students were able to link the Rwandan history to the need for critical thinking amongst the youth, they also visited a genocide survivor who was given a medal of "umurinzi w'igihango" (medal of heroism) for hiding about two hundred and eighty people in the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi.

LDK students realized that they have the biggest responsibility to fighting genocide deniers, they submitted a number of poems detailing their feelings towards the history of the country, and the future to come.



**ISN'T 'NEVER AGAIN'
MORE THAN JUST
TWO WORDS**

We say never again because it happened,
It really happened, that the tutsi were killed
Because of how they were born.
And yes, it happened
But we are not fools to live in the past
Instead we are wise to change it.
To change that the past that left children as orphans
The past that left husbands as widowers
The same past that left women as widows
Still the same past that left people homeless.
But we,
We are the new generation
Arising to change the past

Striving to never let it happen
again
We are the Never Again.

We are people,
And above all, we are one
people
And we say never again
Its' more than just two words.
The outsiders see it as two words,
The pretenders see it as two words,
But let me enlighten you.
If people of the same clan
Kill each other because of birth
differences
And we, Never Again are building
to change the past
Isn't never again more than just
two words then?

No, no,
If the past generation lived as one
but changed
And decided to embrace the
enemy which is divisionism
And the Never Again the post
genocide generation
Are having a good relationship
and connection
Isn't never again more than just
two words?

No, if you still disagree
am still with the speech to
challenge you
now tell me,
if we Never Again
are bringing back the light where
it is dark
isn't never again more than just
two words.
Now tell me, if we then Never A
gain
Are trying to heal the broken
hearts
Of the survivors,
Through teaching the young
generation
Isn't never again more than just
two words?

We are one people
That do more than two words,
that describe us
We are stronger than two words
they use to describe us.

And of course we are more than
two words
We, the Never Again are more
than two words
Because we say more than two
words,
We do beyond two words
Cut the crap, if you disagree
Sense the words in our actions
And feel love within the word
"never again"

But if we the Never Again
Say No to discrimination
Say No to massive killing of
innocent people
Say No to the aggressive
genocide that happened
Aren't we really saying Never
Again is more than just two words?
If you still disagree,
Then you are of no words to top
the past to repeat itself
And of no actions to stand up like
a warrior.
But as I see the spirit in the actions
of we the Never Again
I stand on my two legs saying
That never again is more than just
two words.
But how about you?
If you have eyes to differentiate
the past and present Rwanda
If you have a critical mind to
analyze what happened
And what is being done by we
the Never Again as the current
generation
Then,
"ISN'T NEVER AGAIN MORE THAN
JUST TWO WORDS"

Irahari Rosine, S6 PCB
Lycee de Kigali

CRITICAL THINKING FOR PEACE



Critical thinking for development, critical thinking for reconciliation, and finally critical thinking for peace. When I write about critical thinking I mean the objective analysis and evaluation of an issue in order to form a judgement. Peace on the other hand refers to the freedom from disturbance or tranquility. After the tragedy of The Genocide against the Tutsi in April 1994, it was too difficult to think of anything else apart from having thoughts of desperation, thoughts of how to protect Rwanda 's children, and how to make our society a peaceful and habitable place.

Our mother land Rwanda had to struggle through the tragedy of genocide, to the extent that we still face the consequences up to now, and we are the post genocide generation. However besides that, there are some people who fought for this nation so as bring back peace, but then what is our role as the post genocide generation, what can do, what will we do? The following will clearly elaborate this.

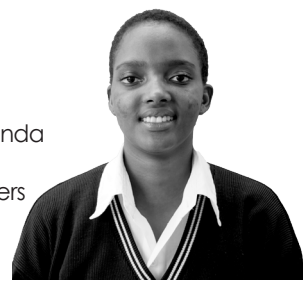
We must have the attitude disposed to consider in a thoughtful way the problems and subjects that comes with one's experience to build or shape the nation. It is through critical thinking for peace that arises humanity in us, like when you lend a helping hand to someone who is in need of help.

In addition to that the youth and the future generation, we should not stand and watch the deniers and do nothing about it when we can actually change the society through our own mindset of promoting peace and fighting against genocide. Peace is possible and achievable. I believe in peace, we can move forward, how about you? You the youth, the future of Rwanda, you the parents, leaders and citizens of Rwanda.

It is through critical thinking for peace that we can fight this battle against conflict. My dear brothers and sisters, dear mothers and fathers, let us join hands to advocate for peace to make our societies a better place, free from threat and danger. Two hands, one heart, I think our hands can do more than just hold a hand towel.

**Rwagasana Felicien, S6 PCB
Lycee de Kigali.**

A WAR OF NEVER AGAIN



I sit, I remember the tragedy that Rwanda suffered,
I recall all the blood flowing, All the rivers turned red
The blue sky, clan water turned into red dark blood flowing rivers,
The rain sounded as stones on the body,
The world seemed to be too small for somebody to hide,
Cries of babies in my ears cannot get out,
Am just a post genocide member narrating the story
Who chose to say " never again".

Never Again is not a song,
Is not a slang to look cool,
Is not a new saying,
It is an action call for every human being.
Because genocide is mean,
It does not look at the quietness, beauty or richness
Old, young, it takes you,
That is why I chose to say never again.

I don't just say never again I mean never again,
I dream never again,
I hope for never again through you and me.
We choose unity, reconciliation, and hard work,
We chose to think big and we refused to be small in the mind,
By being divided by the white man
Because we chose never again.

It is not just a word or statement,
It's a war that needs to be fought by me and you.
We all dream of a world of happiness and joy,
A smile on everyone's face.
It can't just happen,
We have to fight the war for peace,
By working towards never again,
Calling for action, me and you.
We are the compass of this world
So we determine the direction.

In pain we were and the rest is a song of sorrow.
We were torn of our brotherhood
And true identity as country men
For we were blinded by lies.
Our heart still bled and our souls still shattered,
Till we confirmed it would never happen again.
We would strike fast to avoid being torn apart again.
For it will no more that our tears and blood would flow like a river.

We refuse to be small but choose to thing big,
Think critically for peace.

Never again, indeed it shan't.

Kayitesi Sandra, S4 PCB

Building a 'Digital Space' for peace

By Kezio-Musoke David

There are particular words that are synonymous with Never Again Rwanda (NAR)'s work. The most common are 'Spaces For Peace' and 'Citizens Forum'. Though they both serve different purposes, they all involve converging citizen's in a physical space to deliberate over particular issues that under normal circumstances would be difficult to tackle in building peace.

Meeting under a safe 'Space For Peace' or deliberating through a 'Citizen Forum' would require physical presence. In the advent of technology (with over 12 percent of Rwandans accessing mobile Internet) one would ask: What if these spaces converged in a digital domain? Wouldn't they attract a larger level of engagement?

This in a way is a promise of peace at the click of a button, something which is quite appealing. Considering the attention social media is giving to particular segments of these peacebuilding initiatives, there must be something to talk about digital media's role in peace building.

Speaking from the NAR perspective, the organization can easily be described as a human rights and peacebuilding organization. NAR targets mostly young people, the millennial type who basically are over 50 percent of the Rwandan population. NAR is initiating innovations that can easily engage the youth as peacebuilding ambassadors through new spaces, most relevantly a 'digital space' for peace!

The digital world as we know has much of its roots in people who saw it as a tool for peace. It's hard to imagine today it can be considered as a web for warmongering and misogyny. Sometimes, social media is used to de-escalate and prevent violence, although in the case of NAR it is becoming easy for one to find a clear, connection between social media use and peace building.

Some successful innovative projects already

How Never Again Rwanda is engaging the youth through social media in its peacebuilding efforts

implemented by NAR are being deemed more useful than contemporary ICT exposure that has been around for decades.

Last year NAR hosted a conference on 'Societal Healing'. While 200 delegates converged at the Marriot Hotel, over 600 were streaming (from around the globe) the event live on Youtube through Igjhe TV channel. This breaks the physical barrier for information dissemination.

This year during the commemoration of the International Youth Day, logistics allowed only a paltry 400 youth to attend a NAR event that was housed in Ubumwe Hotel. The hashtag created by NAR for the event, #YouthDayRwanda attracted over 800,000 impressions on twitter, meaning the on-line engagement was 2,000 times more effective to convey the panelists' youthful discussions to the digital space.

"When we look at the role of social media in peacebuilding, we have to look beyond just the nature of the message. Social media is just a broadcast tool - it pushes out whatever message the user wants. The important question becomes the strategy employed by the peacebuilding community to engage against the hate and diversionary messages that we are fighting," said one of the staff members of NAR.

At NAR the policy is that every member of staff should be an active 'twitterati' not only in a fun and exciting way but to relay informative messages to those that follow NAR's peace initiatives.

As it turns out, the organization then develops a considerable community of 'peace innovators', smart young people looking at many ways of using ICT tool for peacebuilding.

Just recently when another event [International Day of Peace] was hosted by NAR over 400 youth were at parliament debating

the theme. However the deployment of another hashtag, #PeaceDayRwanda trended with over 20,000 unique accounts (including mobile phones, tablets and computers) participating in related online discussions.

The popularity of social media among the Rwandan youth shows that social media has the potential to be a great tool that can foster dialogue and support peacebuilding efforts.

NAR has more than 60 youth clubs, which converge more than 400 youth form across the country. As the custodian of these groups, constant engagement and mentorship is needed. Creation of the 'Whatsup' group has come in handy, and youthful leaders of these clubs share their testimonies with others while NAR is the enabler sustaining the development of this digital space for peace.

In Rwanda the media landscape is no doubt growing, but is still thin for an organization to reach out to all stakeholders. Ardent readers boast of two dailies including 'Imvaho' and 'The New Times'. While the New Times prints as much as 1000 copies and not more than 8 percent watch TV, justifying the engagement of digital spaces as the norm for major peacebuilding campaigns.

Creation of a 'Digital Space' for peace could come with particular challenges for peacebuilding institutions such as monitoring and siphoning out hate messages, but with the growing community of digital peacebuilders that NAR is engaging through events, messages of hate are sure to be drowned out by the communication of the positive peace values that NAR continues to promote.

The writer is a Communication Consultant with Never Again Rwanda and can be reached on email: kezia@neveragainrwanda.org

IN THE NEWS:

September

Great Lakes Program



Participants of the cross-border International Peace Day celebration. (PHOTOS: Sonia Tona)

Peace day celebration taken to cross-border level

Residents from Rwanda and DRC convened at Vision Jeunesse Nouvelle in a community forum organized by our Great Lakes program in partnership with Pole Institute, Vision Jeunesse Nouvelle and ADEPE to mark international peace day at the regional level.

The forum was part of two day's of activities with the main aim of providing the cross border population with a platform to discuss and identify the main challenges to peace and peaceful coexistence in the sub-region.

Immaculee Mukankubito, Director of Operations and Quality Assurance noted that lack of peace in one country affects its neighboring countries in many ways. According to Onesphore Sematumba, the Director of Research at Pole Institute, peace is not just a mere concept but it refers to the well-being of people, communities and countries.

Participants through group discussions analyzed and assessed the challenges

hindering peaceful co-existence in the region.

Pauline Uwamariya, a resident in the cross border region who attended the community forum presented the key challenges highlighted in the group discussion, which included extortion in Goma, corruption in cross-border trade, and multiple taxation on the DRC border post.

Uwampayizina Marie-Grace, vice-mayor of Rubavu District, while speaking at the event highlighted the importance of dialogue in facilitating social cohesion between the cross border population.

Political and administrative authorities' representatives of selected public institutions from Goma and Rubavu were given a platform to discuss possible solutions to the challenges presented.

Compiled by Sonia Tona

The writer is a Communications Associate with Never Again Rwanda.

NAR research on citizen participation

By Sonia Tona

Never Again Rwanda convenes a technical meeting with the sub-working group to fine-tune the methodology ahead of the upcoming research on civil society and citizen participation in Rwanda.

NAR uses participatory action research (PAR) methods to identify, examine, discuss and share key challenges to peace and reinforce and encourage citizen participation as foundation for effective decision-making and good governance.

During this meeting Jean Paul Safari, a research fellow at NAR shared a presentation on the key aspects of the research proposal and its expectations.

"The study intends to examine stakeholders' (citizens, government, other CSOs, private sector and donors) perspectives and expectations of the relationship between civil society and citizens, explore the existing CSOs mechanisms that have been in place to engage citizens in decision-making processes and analyse how these mechanisms of engagement and the interactions between CSOs and stakeholders influence citizen participation in decision making processes" he added.

Professor Deo Mbonyinkebe, a retired professor of Sociology said that there is no universally agreed upon definition of CSO's. Rwanda has no specific law governing CSO's. He went on to suggest that

"Therefore researchers have the responsibility to suggest an operating definition of the concept appropriate in the Rwandan context" According to Dr. Felicien Usengumukiza, the Director of Research at a representative from Rwanda Governance Board (RGB) he asserted that RGB was is well positioned to help identify the target organizations for this research to be conducted.

The research team was tasked to fine-tune the methodology, tools and identify the target organizations based on the input provided during this technical meeting. This research on civil society and citizen participation is set to start on 22nd October 2017 and will be conducted in ten districts representing all provinces and the City of Kigali. Findings from this research are expected to highlight existing challenges hindering citizen participation in democratic processes and suggest possible solutions.

SUCCESS STORIES



A group of citizens share experiences during a citizen forum in Gicumbi district.
[Photo @Peter Ndahiro]

I have always wished for something that can eradicate ethnic differences

My parents are from different ethnic backgrounds, so during the genocide I was targeted. But after the genocide, I moved from my birthplace and came to this village – but really, I belonged nowhere. I wished for something that could eradicate ethnic differences because they achieve nothing. By luck, I heard that this space had come to our village. In the space, we introduced ourselves and I found that we are from diverse backgrounds within our village. This was something unusual for me, and after that introduction we were still mistrusting each other. This changed bit by bit, until we started to open up. We changed ourselves: our wounds are now healed and we have started to go beyond our space to help other Rwandans. For me, feeling that I had no where I belonged was the biggest challenge, as well as a

discussion we had on our relationships with people from different backgrounds. This changed me. For example, one member of the space gave us his testimony on how he went to the police barracks to sleep there because he had no family here. He talked about how he was refused by a policeman who was from the same ethnic background as him, but was helped by one from a different ethnic background who was a guard at the petrol station nearby. This example moved me, as he showed that ethnicity means nothing. I hope that this change will continue to happen because we are starting to change others.

Name Withheld
MUREKEZI Group: Abanyamahoro
'Space for Peace'
Gender: Male
Age: 53

Through the ‘Space for Peace’ I no longer care about ethnic backgrounds

I have learnt a lot from this space. I have stopped caring so much about people’s ethnic background. During the genocide, I was young. A pastor – who was my neighbor – fled to our home, but after some time they took him from our home and killed him because he was from a different ethnic background. When I asked, they told me that he was killed because he was Tutsi. Then after the genocide in the war of ‘abacengezi’, between the RPF Government and FDLR, some of our people also died in that war. Our parents would tell us that the RPF will revenge their relatives killed in the 1994 genocide. These situations confused me. When I arrived at school I learnt about history of the genocide: how it was prepared and executed.

After some time, I joined this NAR club then one day I attended a training, and I met someone from ‘Abasangirangendo’ (a Peace dialogue that is working with NAR in Southern Province). He told me how they have formed a healing group. I realized that we did not have such group in our community, and wondered how we would have a chance of forming this type of space.


After a sometime I was encouraged by NAR to form this group. The Peace Agents’ training also helped me to understand more. Then in the space, testimonies from members of our space helped me a lot – for example a testimony of how someone was always running away each time he saw a group of people from a different ethnic background together. This changed me too. Our discussion on psychological wounds also helped me a lot because I learnt that not only survivors, but also others, have psychological wounds. With these dialogues, I have now increased my self-acceptance.

Though I believe that these dialogues will continue even after NAR’s support, we should remain active – because even those who were healed might meet people who revoke their previous wounds.

MAKUZA Jean Claude
Abanyamahoro Space for Peace
Gender: Male
Age: 28

I learnt how to smile from the ‘Space for Peace’

The biggest change I got from this space is smiling. Even though I could smile before, I was not happy. I would not take a lot of time to hear from someone, so someone would ask me question or talk to me, but I would avoid talking about myself. When I came to live in this district, I was not open to the people. I was suspicious of everyone: I considered them as ‘abakiga’ and I had nothing to deal with them. They were also saying that I am ‘President Kagame’s child’. They were very marked by their past, [meaning that] because I am a member of the local administration, they would say that I was sent by government. But I would do everything to prove them wrong. Sometimes they would say ‘Can people from different ethnic backgrounds help each other?’

 **On arriving here after 3 months, someone in our space told me how she almost lost her family: I reflected on that because for me, only my dad had died but my Mum and eight siblings are still alive. I decided to change from that day.**

I was also born lucky, because my mum hated anyone who discriminates against people and so I grew up with that mindset. But I did not trust people. On arriving here after 3 months, someone in our space told me how she almost lost her family: I reflected on that because for me, only my Dad had died but my Mum and eight siblings are still alive. I decided to change from that day. Another thing that has changed me are the NAR staff behavior, they are very social and friendly, and I wanted to be like them.

HABIMANA Jean Marie (Not real name)
Abanyamahoro Space for Peace
Gender: Female
Age: 30

INTERVIEW:

Community exchanges are important for healing

Read full version on: www.neveragainrwanda.org

Florence Batoni is the Peacebuilding Program Coordinator at Never Again Rwanda. She spoke to *PeaceInsight* about **community exchange platforms** as a means to sharing the healing process with community stakeholders.

Tell us about the community exchange?

Community exchange is one of NAR's platforms where members of spaces for peace who are undergoing trauma healing, meet with community members and opinion leaders, as well as local leadership to share their experiences in the process of healing. The recent community exchange organized in Nduba sector brought together members from Nduba and youth from World Mission, to share their experiences through personal testimonies. These experiences were shared in the presence of religious leaders, community mediators and security organs among others. One of the benefits from this exchange was the recommendation from the Executive Secretary of Nduba who asked NAR to organize a three day training for local leaders on trauma healing. This is important because it is one way that NAR's work will contribute to trauma informed leadership which will ultimately lead to a process of healing and future reconciliation. On the other hand, some religious leaders confessed that their biblical teachings have been limited in terms of healing because they don't focus on relationship building of their followers, therefore the religious leaders committed to promote peacebuilding through integration of peace related issues into their preaching.

What are the objectives of the platform?

To promote awareness of the Societal Healing Program, reflect on the process of healing among members of spaces for peace, and provide a platform for them to share their traumatic life experiences. Also, the exchange aims to create ownership of the program for the influential opinion leaders so that they support in the implementation and sustainability of the Societal Healing Program. The most important objective is to create strong synergy with other local organizations involved in peacebuilding and reconciliation initiatives as well as other NGOs who are involved in areas such as mental health, business development, and agriculture among others.



When you carry out these exchanges what are the expected outcomes?

Through organizing community exchanges with members of spaces for peace, we are looking to create a strong synergy with other stakeholders that will support our members after the program's phase out process. It is also used as a platform to advocate for particular issues raised by members of our spaces, and create awareness and ownership of the societal healing program. Furthermore these exchanges are aimed at gathering feedback from stakeholders on NAR's psychosocial support, which will inform future interventions with this approach.

Why were the first community exchanges carried out in Nduba and Musanze?

Nduba's space was established in 2015 and has made commendable progress in healing. And as the program is currently coming to the phase out process they needed to be linked to their community, by sharing their journey towards healing with the aim of raising awareness of the Societal Healing axis amongst other members of the community who were not members of this space. As a result of this exchange, Nduba sector executive requested NAR to conduct training for local leaders on healing, this way local leaders can be equipped with the skills and knowledge to support the space members and refrain from using wounding language.

Musanze and Nyabihu spaces for peace are in their first year of their healing process. The spaces are comprised of homogenous and heterogeneous members, i.e. the Musanze space for peace is exclusively made up of genocide survivors while the Nyabihu space for peace is made up of community members from diverse backgrounds. These two groups have shown a steady progress in the process of healing, tolerance and reconciliation. Through this exchange participants will share individual experiences of their healing journey in order for each of the groups to develop an understanding of different wounds affecting each group and learn from individual experiences.

What are the sustainability plans for the spaces for peace after the phase out process?

By engaging space members with community members through platforms that engage them with stakeholders in the community, we are currently training them and planning to link them with institutions engaged in socio-economic projects that can support sustainability of the program. 