

Peace Insight

Never Again Rwanda Newsletter

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.

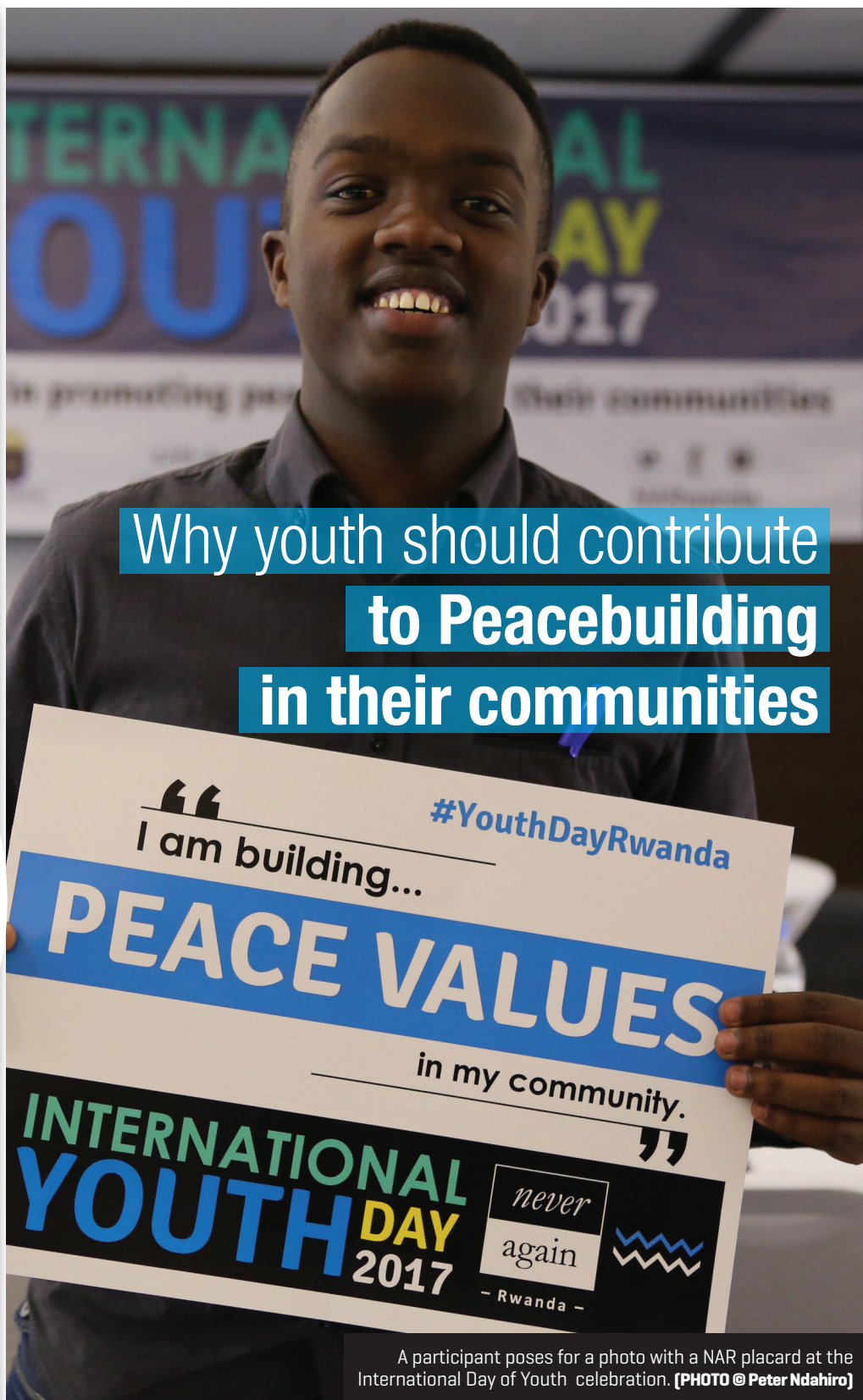
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– Rwanda –



Why youth should contribute to Peacebuilding in their communities

A participant poses for a photo with a NAR placard at the International Day of Youth celebration. (PHOTO © Peter Ndahiro)



By Kezio-Musoke David

The writer is Communication Specialist with Never Again Rwanda.

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Peace has become elusive in a world plagued by youth restiveness. Globally some youths from the 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 a 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 youths are what one can easily call 'peace-actors' and are role models in that are-

CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS:

Why youth should be included in the 'peacebuilding' processes

Facts about youth in Rwanda:

- 50% of the Rwandan population is under 20 years old
- The median age of the population is 22.7 years old.
- Urban areas of Rwanda have a higher percentage of youth than rural areas
- 80% of young people in Rwanda live in rural areas.
- The youth population in Rwanda grew by 30% from 2002 to 2012.

Source: Fourth Population and Housing Census, Rwanda, 2012.

na. 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.

The Ministry of Youth, Culture, and Sports defines a Rwandan youth as that person 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 much needed as an intervention to a peaceful society.

From the IYD deliberation 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 youths as the solution and not as the problem.

"We identify and addressing the social exclusion of young people as a precondition for sustaining peace. Experts believe that considering the needs and aspirations of youth in matters of peace and security is an imperative," said a NAR Youth Coordinator.

In Rwanda there is recognition that the scale and challenges of sustaining peace requires partnerships between different parties, the youth inclusive. NAR has been able to achieve this through forging these numerous relationships with the youth clubs, most of which attended the IYD celebrations. **PI**

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Some youth in the Great Lakes region are easily manipulated because of their lack of the ability to critically think. They can't ask, 'if i do this, what are the consequence of my actions?' Some cant make informed decision. 'Critical Thinking' skills help them develop empathy and also tolerance."

Debbie Karemera

Understanding 'Critical Thinking'



Youth during a training session.
Photo © Asoumani Ntakirutimana

By David Kezio-Musoke

During conflicts youth are more likely to be manipulated into committing crimes against humanity partly due to lack of skills to make informed decisions. Never Again Rwanda converges youth through the Peace Building Institute [PBI] from different parts of the world and on the program the component of 'Critical Thinking' is often added.

According to the organizers of PBI, through acquiring critical thinking skills the participants are trained to create an impact in their respective communities and make informed decisions.

"One of the reasons we added 'Critical Thinking' to our regional PBI program is mainly because most of the youth in the Great Lakes region are easily manipulated because of their lack of the ability to critically think. They can't ask, 'if I do this, what are the consequence of my actions?' Some cant make informed decision.

To read this article online:
www.neveragainrwanda.org

'Critical Thinking' skills help them develop empathy and also tolerance," says Debbie Karemera, the Coordinator of PBI.

"You also need to know that around the region we have lots of cultural diversity and young people grow up with different stereotypes. With Critical Thinking skills one can be able to respect diversity. We add this component to the 'Regional PBI Program' because it mainly affects the participants from the region," she added.

According to criticalthinking.org, "Critical thinking is the intellectually disciplined process of actively and skillfully conceptualizing, applying, analyzing, synthesizing, and/or evaluating information gathered from, or generated by, ob-

servation, experience, reflection, reasoning, or communication, as a guide to belief and action."

During PBI, NAR introduced the critical thinking approach through debates, role-plays, dilemmas and barometer of values (taking positions according to various positions). The sessions are participatory whereby the participants are tasked to define critical thinking in their own words of which key words are highlighted.

Participants are usually encouraged to define on their own what they know about critical thinking. Some of the responses included, "disciplined thinking, clear, rational, open-minded, informed by evidence, willingness to consider, willingness to integrate, alternative perspectives, new or revised perspective's, our ways of thinking and acting as well as the willingness to foster criticality among others."

The relevance of critical thinking is usually further explored by relating critical thinking to Peacebuilding of which it fosters empathy, appreciation for diversity, open-mindedness, overcoming stereotypes and prejudices, rumors and evidence, blind obedience, manipulation and self-responsibility.

This 'Critical Thinking' exercise enabled participants to engage in a friendly debate on whether they agree, disagree or are undecided with this statement. The main aim of this exercise is usually to provide participants with an opportunity to think deeper about their responses and through sharing their experiences some of them ended up being convinced otherwise.

Through this exercise participants stated that they were able to reflect on their individual lives and the work that they do in their respective communities.

"Critical thinking has no direct relationship with being intellectual. I have learnt to be open minded and to accept alternative views other than mine," Samar Mohamed of Sudan. **PI**

IN PICTURES:
International
Youth Day



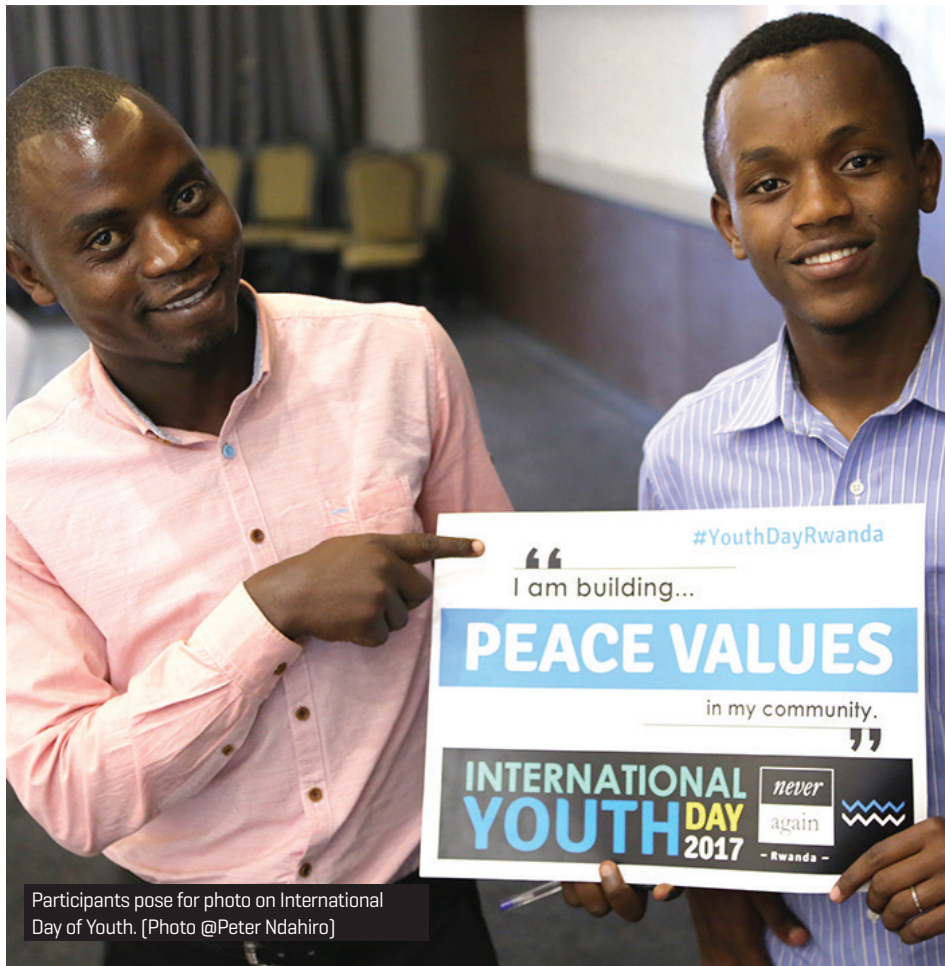
Youth participant poses a question towards panel. [Photo @David Kezio-Musoke]



Dominique Alonga Uwase a panelist during International Youth Day Celebrations. [Photo @David Kezio-Musoke]



A youth participant shares his views during International Youth Day Celebrations. [Photo @David Kezio-Musoke]



Participants pose for photo on International Day of Youth. [Photo @Peter Ndahiro]

IYD attracts hundreds of Rwandan youths

By Eric Birori

Never Again Rwanda joined the world in celebrating the international youth day under the theme “Youth Building Peace” NAR adopted its theme for the day’s celebration “the role of youth in building peace in their communities” reiterated Dr Joseph Nkurunziza, Country Director of Never Again Rwanda.

During a panel discussion, young entrepreneurs asserted that in order for you to start a business you start by developing an idea of what kind of innovation you would like to implement, research, networking and knowing as much as you can about the market.

The United Nations General Assembly endorsed the recommendation made by the World Conference of Ministers Responsible for Youth [Lisbon, 8-12 August 1998] that 12 August be declared International Youth Day in order to empower youth to become agents of change, young people’s inclusion in the peace and security agenda and in society more broadly, is key to building and sustaining peace. **PI**

THE BIG QUESTION:

Was International Youth Day relevant in moulding you into a peacebuilder?



Consolatrice Byiringiro
Youth Participant

Young people are seen to be dismissive, but they are also the best asset to bring about sustained peace. Engrossing youth in peacebuilding is a great opportunity of building and strengthening the next generation.



Denyse Niragire
Youth Participant

The international youth day reminds me that I have a role in making the world a peaceful home for everyone. It reminds me that I belong to the larger family of human kind, old and young, men and women, rich and poor, from every tribe and nation around the world.



Benjamin Byiringiro
Youth Participant

It is the day to evaluate the youth engagement and explore the available opportunities towards sustainable peace. This serves as a platform that sharpens the young peace builders capacity to actively promote peace values by starting in their communities.



Celine Uwineza
Youth Participant

Hearing from young achievers on the panel showed me that all i need to build peace is to be passionate and express what i believe in. Attending IYD opened my mind and made me realise youth need to save in order to curb poverty.



Jayden Bott
Youth Participant

As the owners of the next generation all over the globe, youth need to be partners in peacebuilding. Convening on the International Day of Youth and sharing our experiences working for peace, is what will allow us to understand each other.

Voice from the NAR youth coordinator



Never Again Rwanda aims to ensure that the International Day of Youth is celebrated by Rwandan Youth from different provinces of Rwanda and Kigali city. It is important for the youth in Rwanda to understand their role in building peace. By gathering them on this day, we can discuss the non-violent means of solving conflicts that will keep us on a path towards sustainable peace.

The youth affiliated to NAR conducted a number of activities for this year's International Day of Youth in various provinces of Rwanda. These included participatory theatre sketches, games and puzzles, as well as an ongoing Youth Arts competition.

These activities and discussions all contribute towards an overarching goal of creating a youth network of empowered peace actors in their communities.



Anitha Umutoyiwase
NAR Youth clubs facilitator

By Derrick Murekezi

Guest Writer

Emphasizing Critical Thinking as a tool for Peace and Sustainability

As Rwandans, there's never been a better time to be alive. Everyday brings with it another opportunity to talk about Rwanda's rise from economic ruin, to being a regional and international leader in gender equality, healthcare coverage, security and environmental protection.

Every April however, brings with it a reminder of how things were. A reminder that it took a generation of selfless, and patriotic young people to fight for the very freedom that is now a birthright. More importantly, each April reminds us as young people that we have a battle of our own: the eradication of genocide ideology, and the sustainability of peace and development.

This is the inspiration behind "Critical Thinking for Peace", a Davis Projects for Peace grant recipient, initiated and executed by my partner Ian and I. Critical Thinking for Peace is a project that strives to equip youth across the country with the knowledge and understanding to adequately take up the mantle of sustaining the peace and progress achieved. Launched in July 2016, it started with an initial cohort of 32 student leaders representing high schools from all four provinces and the city of Kigali. Today, the project's reach has expanded to over 200 students in numerous clubs.

The emphasis on critical thinking as a tool for peace & sustainability, is a result of the realization that while it's impossible to isolate every mindset with genocide ideology, it is possible to work towards arming the greater masses with the ability to question and withstand it's influence. If history has taught us anything it's that genocide is planned by a small group, but is only made possible by the involvement of the general population. In this case, involvement means everything from active participation to standing by and allowing it to happen. Therefore the vital question is how can we create a generation that will never participate or stand by and watch as people are dehumanized and killed?

Critical Thinking for Peace chooses to approach this from three angles: Dialogue, Critical Thinking, and Community

Service.

During a one-week camp held in Agahozo Shalom Youth Village in Rwamagana, students took part in workshops and lectures led by mentors and experts from partner organizations like Aegis Trust, CNLG, Never Again Rwanda and IRDP. In a participant centered and driven program, the students had the opportunity to learn from and interact with their trainers closely, allowing room for fruitful dialogue. The project also implemented a Model United Nations component, to allow students to acquire critical thinking skills while putting to work some of the knowledge they received from prior workshops.

"Utazi iyo ava ntamenya iyo agana", and that's exactly why it is important to establish channels and platforms for open dialogue across generations, but also within the youth population itself. This involves our Rwandan history from the pre-colonial era, colonization and independence of the country, the genocide, liberation, and modern-day Rwanda. As expressed by participants in the camp, it is easier to stand up against genocide denial when you grasp the full extent of its origins, plotting and execution.

This July the team behind Critical Thinking for Peace in collaboration with this year's Davis Projects for Peace grant recipient, Julia Lisi, will be hosting a second edition of what is hoped to become an annual Summer School of Thought [formerly a summer camp], that will bring together student leaders to further work on creating a generation that protects and sustains on the strides to excellence that Rwanda has taken within the past 23 years. **PI**



NAR News:



August Activities

Participants brainstorm during Inzira Nziza training in Gisagara. [Photo @Sonia Tona]

Over 200 Youths trained on Human Rights and Democracy

By **Sonia Tona**

Communications Associate

In order to empower participants with skills in Human Rights, democracy, leadership and critical thinking, NAR in partnership with US-AID Rwanda organized a 5 day training on basic Human rights, participatory and critical thinking approaches in Huye, Gisagara and Ngororero districts.

The sessions brought together 240 youth champions from 3 districts. Participants explored topics like Human Rights and participation, Gender and Human rights, democracy and critical thinking.


During these sessions participants through group discussions and presentations exchanged ideas on different topics. The youth got to understand more about their role in democracy, and how their involvement in politics can lead to development.

"Youth should believe in themselves that they

are able to make right decisions through critical thinking" said Jean Baptiste a participant from Huye.

Some of the challenges hindering youth participation in democratic processes include; Lack of self-confidence, unemployment, and a low number of youth in decision making processes and leadership.

Upon completion, participants gained a renewed spirit for participation in democratic processes and committed themselves to initiating dialogue spaces, and associations that help people to know their rights within their communities.

Inzira Nziza is a two year funded project by US-AID Rwanda and is being implemented by Never Again Rwanda in 5 Districts of Rwanda. The overarching project goal is to contribute to the promotion of peaceful dialogue and democratic values through human rights based approaches influencing the understanding of the rights of the most vulnerable groups in Rwanda. 

4

FACTS YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT INZIRA NZIZA

1. **Increasing youth participation in democratic processes.**
2. **Confidence building sessions where the youth are provided with safe and open spaces for dialogue**
3. **Providing a platform for the youth to engage with policy makers .**
4. **Ensuring the youth develop a deeper understanding of human right sand democracy.**



Participants following a session during the Bukavu resilience workshop. [Photo @Sonia Tona]

GREAT LAKES: Study on resilience for reconciliation: Researchers meet to design the methodology

By **Reverien Interayamahanga**
Great Lakes Program Coordinator

From 21st to 25th August, a regional workshop was organized by Interpeace in Bukavu [DRC] with the aim of developing the methodology for the ongoing research on resilience for reconciliation to be undertaken by the Trans-Border Dialogue for Peace in the Great lakes Region. The workshop was facilitated by Interpeace in collaboration with researchers from Harvard Humanitarian Initiative (HHI), and brought together selected members of Technical Support Groups (and researchers from the 6 partner organisations from Burundi [CENAP], DRC [APC, RIO, Pole Institute and CEJA] and Rwanda [NAR].

Researchers from partner organisations shared with participants the findings from case studies they conducted in their respective zones on reconciliation processes from a resilience perspective.

In addition to the above, a refresher training was conducted as part of the workshop, on partici-



Participants listen in to proceedings at the workshop. [Photo @GLP/Interpeace]

patory action research methodology on the one hand, and qualitative and quantitative approaches on the other hand. This exercise paved the way to the discussions about the methodology and research questions for the said research. It was resolved that the research will be both qualitative and quantitative.

Further, the workshop included a session on facilitation tips of focus group discussions and in-

terviews. This was mainly intended for researchers who have recently joined the programme but also served as refresher exercise for researchers who started with longer experience with the same programme.

As a way forward, detailed research protocol and data collection tools are going to be developed to be able to seek relevant reviews and approvals before embarking on field work. **PI**



SUCCESS STORIES

Here are some of the success stories from our youth peace dialogues and NAR's Spaces for Peace. The sensitive nature of the stories some participants weren't comfortable sharing their personal details and preferred anonymity. The names used in some instances are not those of the storytellers. Starting with this issue, NAR will document three stories in each edition of **PeaceInsight**.

Its now easy for me to talk about my psychological wounds

"I used to hear the words Hutu and Tutsi, and I thought we were different. But when I came to this space, I found that we are the same. I did not know what a 'wound' is before, but now I am aware of what a psychological wound is like. It was very hard for me to talk about my psychological wounds within a group of people, but with this space I have got strength to talk about my past. I have parents from different ethnic background: my dad was a Tutsi, and my mum was a Hutu. In the genocide, seven of my siblings died, and six of us survived. This left deep wounds for my mum, so that every time one of us fails to do something, my mum would say 'if one of my children had survived it wouldn't be like this!' I thought Hutus are very bad and violent people. I was living in loneliness and would spend some time crying.

Through the dialogue we had on how you can help someone who has experienced wounds – especially the testimony of Driver Innocent (a member of the space) – I became aware that there are others who have deeper wounds than mine, and it helped me to open up. Before, I thought Twas people cannot greet me - but now we can talk. I mistrusted people. I thought that if I share my story, people would tell others what I have said. But now we trust each other, so I do not fear to share my story.

In brief, I have learnt a lot in this space and I know how I can behave as a result of what we gain from this space.

Mushimiyimana (21 years old)
Abanyamahoro Space for Peace

The Space-for-Peace has boosted my self-esteem – Katabonwa

I have learnt a lot from this space. I had lost the hope for my future, and I mistrusted Hutus. Sometimes I would argue with some of them and my scar would directly hurt me because I remember what they did to me. Makuza (a Peace Agent) brought me into this space. Since arriving here, things are changing. My self-esteem has increased and I have also started helping others in my community. I had a neighbour who had been depressed, so I started talking to her: luckily, my colleague from our space and I visited her recently and repaired her house. Before, she would run when she met a Hutu. But we visited her and she is now changing. Myself, I am no longer scared of meeting with Hutus – now I can tell my children not to discriminate people because those who committed genocide are no longer doing that. Through our dialogue, I realized that all human beings are the same: even God hates sin, but not the sinners. I have now overcome my phobia. Before, I would never travel in the evening from my house to Kara centre – but nowadays I can go anywhere, at any time. I can say that what helped me most was the process of sharing our testimonies, which really healed my heart. I do have hope that our space will continue to be the source of change, because we have started to go beyond our space and to change other people in our community.

Female Participant (69 years old)
Abanyamahoro Space for Peace

They thought I was mentally ill but the 'space' healed my wounds

I had experienced the very deepest psychological wounds. I was very depressed. During the genocide, I was a young child but I was conscious of everything. It was impossible for me to talk to a Hutu. Arriving in this space I have met people of my generation, old men and women, and I started to open up. Now I see that everyone is a human being. I used to hate Hutus to the extent that if I could find them in the church I would avoid going back into that church forever. I was addicted by alcohol, whenever I could remember what happened in genocide I would drink beers in order to forget what happened. All this has changed because when I arrived in this space I founded

Hutus, Tutsis and Batwa people are here. When everyone gave testimony of what happened to them, I started changing the way I considered them.

Some people used to say that I was mentally ill person, but being here helped me a lot. Our colleague one day talked about how he hated Tutsi – I realized that I was like him, and that I also hated Hutus. I believe that these changes will continue because they have healed our wounds."

29-year-old male participant
Abanyamahoro Space for Peace

INTERVIEW:

An inside look into Isoko Performing Arts



Read full version of this article on our website: www.neveragainrwanda.org

PeaceInsight's Sonia Tona interviewed Sharon Rwagitare, member of Isoko Arts Theatre

How did you get involved in Isoko performing arts?

The first time I heard about Isoko performing arts, was through a friend who is actually the founder. Amina was my high school friend we had met in acting club at school. They had a performance and she invited me to join them during practice, where I was given a role in which I performed well. I then joined them after that performance.

How long has Isoko performing arts been active?

Isoko performing arts started midway through 2016, although the founder developed the idea earlier on and had already mobilized youth with talent to join. Within one year of service, now Isoko performing arts has empowered youth to be peace ambassadors in their communities through art.

What role does Isoko performing arts theatre play in promoting conflict resolution and peace building?

Isoko performing arts uses art as a tool of communication to raise sensitive issue to be discussed. We see theatre as an easy way to communicate on sensitive issues. By drawing inspiration from what happens in our communities, we encourage youth to discuss these sensitive topics, and find solutions that will build sustainable peace in their societies.

How can youth get involved?

Well doors are open for the youth who feel they are passionate about the arts, and want to spread a message of peace. Outside Isoko performing arts, youth can join other networks for discussion and participate in spreading the message of peace and contribute to the change they want to see in their communities.

What advice would you give to the youth?

I encourage the youth to use their talents in a positive way in order to make positive changes in their communities. As it is said, youth are the future, it means as the youth we have to do something today, so that we can be the future. Last but not the least I would emphasize that the youth should use its energy to build not to destroy.



Members of Isoko Performing Arts at the International youth day. [Photos @David Kezio-Musoke]