

*never*  
again

– Rwanda –

# DUFATANYE

1<sup>ST</sup> EDITION  
QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

## About Never Again Rwanda

A peace building and social justice organization that arose in response to the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi. Guided by a vision of a society that enjoys sustainable peace, development and social justice.

# Foreword

***Esteemed partners and readers, murakaza neza!***

Welcome to our 1st edition of Never Again Rwanda's newsletter, DUFATANYE (meaning working together), highlighting stories, achievements and activities conducted with our partners at national and grassroots levels. Together we have contributed to empowering the population with opportunities to become active citizens, promoted trauma healing and genocide prevention, created participatory and inclusive decision-making processes, and increased the capacity of youth to become peace agents and advocates for their rights.

As previously done, in 2022 our interventions mostly were focused on the youth. As an organization, we have always felt the need to edify and empower youth, providing them with the necessary tools to combat mental health issues, build their leadership skills, and become beacons of peace and hope. Across our 5 pillars, we have worked with youth to have them be the center and leaders of activities and events like the National Youth Conference on Genocide Commemoration, the International Youth Day, the International Day of Peace, the National Intergenerational Dialogue etc. Youth have also been conducting quarterly round table discussions with their local leaders to advocate for their social and economic development while actively participating in the decision-making processes in their respective districts.

With our latest programs, 2022 was a year where we forged strong new partnerships, which enabled us to support Community Based Organizations (CBOs) and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) to build their capacities in Governance, Policy Advocacy and Participatory Action Research. We also invested efforts in enhancing citizen participation through our various platforms such as the Citizen Forums and the Women Inspire Forums which are unique approaches to transparency, accountability, and citizen engagement. These platforms facilitate civic engagement by providing information, facilitating accountability, and improving collaborations between local leaders and the people they represent.



**Dr Nkurunziza Joseph Ryarasa**

Executive Director, Never Again Rwanda

Through our strategic pillars we were able to reach 16,363 direct beneficiaries (48.6% females and 51.4% male). We are happy that 52.6% of our participants were youth while 47.4% were aged above 30. The categories of people engaged by the programme include community members, youth, and decision-makers at local and national levels, CSOs, development partners, and the media. Indirectly, NAR reached more than 300,000 people through dialogues, roundtables dialogues, workshops, campaigns, and media engagements.

There is much more to come next year, including a much-anticipated drama series "IJWI" on Radio Rwanda. The series will feature issues around citizen participation and provide an opportunity for youth and other vulnerable groups to discuss issues around human rights, democracy, and their inclusion and participation as well as relevant laws and policies.

I want to thank all of you who have participated and engaged with our work, supported us, and inspired us. Your unwavering belief in our work helped us accomplish remarkable goals. You have helped us create impact where it matters most. As we move forward with renewed optimism and hope, allow me to wish all of you a happy, healthier, and prosperous 2023.

Wishing you a good read.

Murakoze!

# ENABLING THE VOICES OF THE HISTORICALLY MARGINALIZED POPULATION: SEEN, HEARD, VALUED



*Through Dufatanye Kwiubakira Igihugu ((DKI) activity, implemented by Never Again Rwanda (NAR) in 8 districts of Rwanda, the historically marginalized people are empowered and engaged to not only build their knowledge and confidence, but also to be nurtured into agents of change and beacons of hope for their broader community.*

“Throughout my childhood, due to years of marginalization and discrimination, it was a rare incident to see any member of my community interact with local leaders; today I am confident enough to attend a meeting hosted by the President of the Republic and voice my opinion.”  
Nyiracumi Marie Claire, Gishamvu Sector, Huye District

For too long, Historically Marginalized Populations were isolated and excluded from all aspects of life due to unequal power relationships across the economic, political, social, and cultural dimensions of life. Through various political and social integration programs, the government of Rwanda has made deliberate and concerted efforts to achieve inclusion of the Historically Marginalized Populations (HMPs). However, due to the structural factors that have caused them to live in deprivation and discrimination, they continue to be disintegrated.

Through “Dufatanye Kwiubakira Igihugu” (DKI) activity, Never Again Rwanda is heightening the urgency on the need to intensify participation of all citizens from different backgrounds including the HMPs, in local governance and decision-making processes.

Nyiracumi Marie Claire, a widow from the Historically Marginalized Community in Huye district, was one of the rights holders who participated in one of the DKI activities - training sessions on human rights, policy literacy, effective participation, critical thinking, and leadership. She is also a member of the monthly-held Women Inspire Forums that gather women to discuss factors among others, that hinder women's participation in governance and impediments to their social economic development.

Nyiracumi narrates that her participation in the programs have brought to her awareness national policies and programs that directly impact her life. She expresses that she feels empowered to use her voice confidently and intentionally in community platforms and spaces when engaging with local leaders. She credits the NAR-led activities for the assertiveness that she displays when attending community meetings or even the “meet the president” sessions, something she had not foreseen ever happening.

Nyiracumi attests to gaining knowledge, connecting with others, and being inspired to create initiatives that have income-generating potential. Through the engagement she has had, she has felt visible, valued, and now actively participates in community life by consulting with fellow community members on different issues and challenges. “I have started raising awareness in my community on issues such as unintended pregnancies and school dropouts. As a social unit, we are under served when it comes to services such as empowerment programs and opportunities. I urge different stakeholders to capacitate us to be active citizens and assign us leadership roles. When people are engaged meaningfully, their confidence to participate is nurtured, and they develop a sense of belonging and ownership to their community.” Nyiracumi said

The DKI project in many ways has developed the symbiotic relationship between the grassroots and the leadership, ensuring that there is communication of needs, fed from the bottom up. Thus, leading to a society rightfully served, and a government that strives to cater to the needs of those it serves.



# PROMOTING DIALOGUE AND EXCHANGES BETWEEN YOUTH AND ELDERS TOWARDS PEACE BUILDING

Young people who have experienced conflict firsthand have a vital role to play in peacebuilding. They have a clear vision of what peace could look like in their countries and communities and have the drive to work towards the realization of these goals.

NAR in partnership with Interpeace, Conflict Alert, Prevention Centre (CENAP), POLE Institute and Refugee Law Project (RLP), funded by the EU are implementing a Regional Project “Youth Innovation Lab for Peace (YouthLab)”, which aims at equipping youth in the Great Lakes region (Rwanda, Burundi, DR Congo, and Uganda) with the skills and knowledge they need to play an effective role in governance, peacebuilding, and development processes at local, national, and regional levels. The project uses awareness raising, intergenerational dialogue, and advocacy to challenge cultural, age and gender norms that limit the ability of young men and women to effectively engage in civic, political, and peace processes in the Great Lakes region.

The intergenerational dialogue was themed: “History of Conflicts in Rwanda and its effects on Peace, Trust and Social Cohesion among the Youth” and convened participants from diverse backgrounds across Rwanda including youth innovators, peace fellows, youth leaders and elders comprised of former politicians,

academia, researchers, youth community leaders and participants from special interest groups.

“Older people often remember the old days, and young people would prefer to think more about the present and look to the future. The older generation finds it hard to forget old wounds and grievances, and young people can start from a clean sheet.” - Young Rwandan peace fellow

From the discussions, it was obvious that even against tremendous challenges, youth are actively engaging in their communities, and are making positive contributions to peace. Unfortunately, they are facing numerous barriers to participating in formal and informal peace processes. This includes a persistent lack of trust in governments and political institutions; voicelessness based on identities including age, as well as threats of violence and radicalization. Women and girls face additional challenges when it comes to exclusion from public spaces or lack of confidence when asked to participate in various platforms.

From the discussions of this intergenerational dialogue emerged 5 recommendations on how young people can play a greater role in peacebuilding:

1. Support youth visions of peace because even when they have not known life without conflict, young people have clear visions of what peace should be and have a strong desire for a future without violence. Peace processes need to ensure meaningful inclusion of these views in their design and implementation.
2. Create space for youth to engage in political processes. Many youths feel excluded from political processes, and from making meaningful contributions. It is crucial that the government makes sustained commitments to rebuild their trust and confidence. There are also additional challenges facing women and girls in gaining access to public spaces which need to be addressed.
3. Facilitate and support dignified livelihoods. Greater economic opportunities for youth are necessary to motivate young people to pursue peaceful and productive paths in their lives. Youth are keen to increase their opportunities to learn skills and develop entrepreneurial capacities but these need to be made available to them.
4. Support education and capacity-building for peace. Access to education is fundamental for facilitating young people's positive engagement in peace. Youth suggested

specific and practical ways this could be realized, including reforms to civic education, and the introduction of peace education that is consistent and available to everyone.

5. Facilitate inter-community dialogue and exchanges. Distrust, stereotypes, and prejudices can be tackled by initiatives, such as exchanges, which encourage continuous dialogue and engagement between youth from different communities. It is particularly important that young people who have been directly victimized by conflict are involved.

During the event, the participants provided input for similar dialogues and platforms in the Great Lakes region including the Regional Youth Peace Platform and the Regional Advocacy Working Group. The event provided participants with the space to reflect on the persistent challenges affecting youth-elder relationships, to find sustainable solutions to peacebuilding efforts, and be exposed to better understanding of different historical narratives and approaches to peacebuilding.

Not harnessing the power of youth is detrimental to peacebuilding efforts. The challenges they are facing need to be addressed, and young people should be involved in the design of any responses to conflict.



# THE ROLE OF GOVERNMENT AND NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS IN GENDER EQUALITY



As societies evolve, the promotion of gender equality should be seen as an obligation, as it contributes to peaceful societies. Rwanda's historical and cultural past encouraged men to have power over women, which resulted in a mindset in which women's rights were less or not considered in comparison to those of men. Women had no access to education, no inheritance of property, no right to speak in front of men.

In recent years, the Rwandan Government has adopted policies to uphold the advancement of women, ensuring equal rights and benefits as those of men, and initiated reforms related to the principle of equality and harmony. Girls' education has also been encouraged, as a means of leveling the playing field between girls and boys through education, ensuring a further step towards gender equality.

Non-Governmental Organizations have played an important role in raising awareness of the principle of equality and harmony among individuals, families, and communities at large. Never Again Rwanda (NAR) is one such NGO, as its core mission focuses on peacebuilding and

social justice with specific experiences of men and women who have gone through violence, especially the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi.

NAR's approach focuses on gender mainstreaming and integrating a gender transformative approach into activities, with the aim of educating staff on the different principles of gender equality. This leads to peaceful societies and sustainable development within Rwanda.

Through the Women Inspire Forum, Never Again Rwanda has given women a platform to recognize their contribution to nation building. It gives women the opportunity to have their voices heard, to understand that they also have rights and play an important role in self-development.

The journey of gender equality is not straightforward, there is the issue of mindset change and shifting attitudes. Gender equality also requires integrating both men and women with a clear understanding and realization that equality and harmony and joining forces leads to the betterment of all.

# REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL PEACE BUILDING INSTITUTE (PBI) WORKSHOP



As one of the cores of the Peace Building Institute (PBI), the workshop this year hosted regional and international students, as well as young professionals from Rwanda and abroad. PBI participants acquired the skills to become peace ambassadors and work to help shape the world towards sustainable peace.

In May and July of this year, the PBI brought together more than 45 participants from various African countries and the USA, representing initiatives such as ending child labor, youth sensitization to culture, peacebuilding in media and the mining industry, among others.

During the two-week PBI workshop, participants explored topics such as transitional justice and good governance, and engaged in intercultural dialogue, critical thinking, analysis of complex problems, and problem-solving.

In his opening remarks, the Executive Director of Never Again Rwanda urged the participants to use the opportunity not only to contribute to a peaceful community but also to help solve global challenges. He noted, "The world will only resolve the issues in peacebuilding, if it invests in young people – you are the hope of our world and the generations to come."

The participants also interacted with several speakers who were peacebuilders in their respective communities, who created peace initiatives and worked towards global peace. They visited various historical sites in Rwanda, including Genocide memorials and cultural sites to learn more about Rwanda's post-genocide reconstruction efforts.



Elizabeth Kinta Gomes from The Gambia emphasized that PBI reminded her of her responsibility to stand up for other women and girls who face challenges in their communities and around the world. "I have a responsibility not only to inspire myself but also to be an advocate for other women from grassroots levels who are facing diverse challenges." Gomez works at Peace Hub Gambia, one of the organizations that were founded by young people after graduating from PBI.



## THE WORLD NEEDS TO HARNESS THE FULL POTENTIAL OF ALL GENERATIONS

As the world celebrated International Youth Day on the 12th of August, Never Again Rwanda hosted a youth conference which brought together over 100 participants, including representatives of the younger and older generations from various districts across Rwanda, Civil Society Organizations, and decision makers.

With this year's theme being **"Intergenerational Solidarity: Creating a World for All Ages"**, representatives of the younger and older generations discussed cultural norms and attitudes that negatively affect intergenerational solidarity in their communities and explored

strategies to foster healthy and sustainable interactions and relations among generations.

Youth as the pillar and future of the country, were reminded to amplify their potential to create opportunities and the development of the society as the future relies on the young generation. If youth learn from older generations and respect them while the older generation listen to young people and give them an opportunity to voice their ideas, it can improve collaboration between both generations. Intergenerational solidarity and cooperation may help to respond to some of the current societal challenges.







## CONSENSUAL DEMOCRACY: A JOURNEY TO CITIZEN PARTICIPATION, LESSONS FROM RWANDA.

Never Again Rwanda (NAR) and participants from Civil Society Organizations representatives, political parties' representatives, decision makers, academics, youth leaders' representatives, government entities and media practitioners met together as the world celebrated the International Day of Democracy, in a reflection dialogue under the theme: "Consensual Democracy: A Journey to Citizen Participation, Lessons from Rwanda".

The International Day of Democracy provides an opportunity to review the state of democracy in the world. Democracy is as much a process as a goal, and only with the full participation of and support by the international community, national governing bodies, civil society and individuals, can the ideal of democracy be made into a reality to be enjoyed by everyone, everywhere.

In Rwanda, democracy revolves around the notion of 'consensual and pluralist democracy'

which includes citizen participation. Rwandan democracy is people-driven and depends on citizens' recommendations, it is empirical and related to stability. Its implementation depends on the history, culture, and development the same as each country sets its own standards for democracy.

"Rwandans should reflect on what happened during the Genocide against the Tutsi, 28 years ago; see where they came from and contribute towards democratic change. This is a good time to talk and see the kind of democracy we have in Rwanda; how to maintain the best we have achieved in democracy and build a solid foundation so that we leave a legacy to our offspring." Executive Director of Never Again Rwanda, Dr. Joseph Ryarasa Nkurunziza.

NAR does not advocate for a specific model of government but promotes democratic governance as a set of values and principles



that should be followed for greater participation, equality, security, and human development. Democracy provides an environment that respects human rights and fundamental freedoms, in which the freely expressed will of the people is exercised. People have a say in decisions and can hold decision-makers to account. Women and men have equal rights, and all people are free from discrimination.

Though there is still a low perception of democracy; consensus democracy aims at answering people's questions and in my opinion, it's proven to be suitable to Rwandans. If the opposition does not feel satisfied, the solution is not to fight with the ruling party, but to show what needs to be done. There is a need to organize dialogues and teach citizens about the maturity of democracy because citizens do not have enough knowledge about it. Buchanan Ismael, PhD - Senior Lecturer - University of Rwanda

Political parties' representatives emphasized their role and responsibility in changing citizens' perceptions of political parties, as they are not well informed about the parties and their functioning. They committed themselves to increasing dialogues about political parties, visibility, and democracy to reduce political criticism.

Democracy is strongly associated with peace, and nothing can be done without sustainable security. "Rwanda has chosen democracy which gives people time to choose what is best for them and the government is constitutionally multi-party. As political parties, it is our role to provide positive and constructive feedback

as our objective is the same though we are in different parties, we need to address the challenges that we face as Rwandans." Dr Frank Habineza President of Democratic Green Party of Rwanda and a parliamentarian.

Media practitioners reminded the group of both the good and bad side that the media has played in the Rwandan democratic journey and how this has affected the relationship media and Government currently have.

With the media policy review in the pipeline, we hope that the goal will be to create space for a free, independent, and pluralistic media that is able to keep the public informed on matters of public interest and enable them to make informed decisions and hold the government accountable. This will allow journalists to be a key ingredient to democracy. Berna Namata, National Media Group, Country Manager

Some of the recommendations from the discussions were to increase opportunities and platforms for discussions on consensus democracy and its effectiveness, to increase awareness of key points of democracy and the capacity of media practitioners to educate the population.

There are also strategies such as increasing dialogues in Rwanda and in the diaspora, awareness campaigns, research, and publication as well as the use of social media platforms to continue to educate citizens and encourage their participation in all these processes.



## UPHOLDING UNITY AND SUSTAINABLE PEACE; INTERNATIONAL DAY OF PEACE CELEBRATIONS

The International Day of Peace (World Peace Day) celebrated annually on 21 September, is devoted to strengthening the ideals of peace, both within and among all nations and peoples. At a time when war and violence often monopolize our news cycles, the International Day of Peace is an inspiring reminder that if only we could give it a chance, together we can create peace.

This year in partnership with the Ministry of National Unity and Civic Engagement (MINUBUMWE), Never Again Rwanda celebrated the International Day of Peace, by organizing a youth parliamentary dialogue held under the theme: "The Rwandan Model in Upholding Unity and Sustainable Peace: The Role of Youth in Ending Hate Speech."

Convened at the Rwanda Parliament, 500 youth from various districts, parliamentarians, peacebuilding actors, decision-makers, and development partners discussed strategies and approaches to uphold unity as they tackled hate speech in different forms as a hindrance to Rwandan unity.

It is always important to remind each other that Peace is achievable. Throughout history, most societies have lived in peace most of the time. Today, we are much less likely to die in war than our parents or grandparents. Since the establishment of the United Nations and the creation of the Charter of the United Nations, governments are obligated not to use force against others unless they are acting

in self-defense or have been authorized by the UN Security Council to proceed. Given that some states don't follow through with this commitment, The International Day of Peace is devoted to observing 24 hours of cease-fire and non-violence. At NAR our tradition has been to start the celebrations by watering the peace tree at the parliament garden.

Both the Speaker of Parliament Donatille Mukabalisa, Honorable Jean-Damascene Bizimana, the Minister of National Unity and Civic Engagements, Ozonnia Ojielo, the Resident Coordinator of the United Nations in Rwanda and Eric Mahoro, Deputy Executive Director of Never Again Rwanda encouraged youths to take actions in fighting the genocide ideology and any other form of discrimination using the same platforms that those who are spreading hate speech and Genocide ideology as well as denying the Genocide against the Tutsi use so that they can tell their own stories and shade the truth. Mr. Eric Mahoro and Mr. Ozonnia Ojielo, reiterated their commitment to working with the government and other partners in pursuing peace, human rights, social and economic development while ensuring that no one is left behind, while always working with the youth and for the youth.

Life is better in a world where peace exists, and the International Day of Peace is a chance to look to those who have been peacemakers and peacekeepers to learn what we can each do individually to make the world a more peaceful place.

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# ADVANCING TRAUMA INFORMED LEADERSHIP

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Trauma-informed Leadership is a way of understating or appreciating there is an emotional world of experiences rumbling around beneath the surface." One can affirm that when emotional responses are triggered in either any professional space or any other social environment each person responds according to the extent of their emotional scars, traumas and emotional strengths. Never Again Rwanda is blazing the trail for a new approach to leadership and behavioral change management. NAR has called on local leaders to look at their responsibility, and to take on the work of their own personal traumas to bring an individualized approach to the communities they serve.

This call was emphasized through a training convened by NAR on trauma informed leadership for local leaders from local authorities, CNF, NYC, NCPD, IBUKA, AVEGA in Rutsiro and Musanze District. The training under peacebuilding and genocide prevention program meant to give the local leaders basic skills in terms of capacity building and awareness on trauma informed leadership.

In Rutsiro District, trained local leaders increased their knowledge in capacity building and critical thinking which they would apply in their day-to-day activities. They said that they understood how to deal with people who have trauma and depression, dealing with the issue of healing wounds. Most of them stated that they did not know that they could hurt someone by labeling them and stereotyping. They learned to identify someone with wounds whereas before the training they were not able to do so.

It is safe to remind each one that regardless of the root of the trauma, those working in a capacity to support others can benefit from gaining a deeper understanding of how trauma affects social development and what intervention efforts have been effective in helping community healing. In addition, local leaders and civil society organizations can be instrumental in advocating for behavioral changes in communities and service system policies and protocols that ameliorate the experiences of trauma-affected citizens and advance community cohesion.





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