



REPUBLIKA Y'U RWANDA



ARCHIDIOCESE DE KIGALI

COMMISSION DIOCESAINE JUSTICE ET PA.

INTARA AMAJYARUGURU

AKARERE KA RULINDO

*Unity and Reconciliation week in Rulindo
district*

2012 Celebration

Event report

Rulindo, 21/12/ 2012

Co-organized by:

- The authority of Rulindo District; Reconciliation forum, Rulindo district; Shalom Educating for Peace, Rwanda; Commission Diocesaine Justice et Paix, Kigali Archidiocese ; Twiyunge Rusiga Gako Cooperative; Platform of Civil Society in Rulindo District

Sponsored by:

- Search for Common Ground;
- Reconciliation forum, Rulindo district;
- National Unity and Reconciliation Commission;
- SORWATHE sa ltd.

Reported by:

- Tharcisse Rutayisire, Governace Unit, Rulindo District
- Jean de Dieu Basabose, Shalom Educating for Peace Rwanda
- Annonciata Kaligirwa, Commission Justice et Paix, Archidiocèse de Kigali, Catholic Church

1) Introduction

From 2005-2007 the National Unity and Reconciliation Commission (NURC) carried out an opinion survey on the topic of social cohesion and concluded that there is much need to improve and strengthen interpersonal trust among Rwandans. The results of the survey show that a significant majority of survey respondents, 58%, believe that it is “naïve to trust others.” Although the NURC realizes that this fact in and of itself does not need to be of great concern considering the realities in industrialized societies where up to 50% of participants in comparable surveys have also expressed general distrust in their fellow citizens when confronted with a similar question, this seems to be a great challenge in Rwandan society (and many other African societies), where community life is prevailing.

Additionally, the survey shows that the feelings of distrust have been growing in Rwanda from 49% in 2005 to 58% in 2007. Obviously, this distrust affects the health of the communities and discourages the construction of sustainable development. The report on the survey says that *“Interpersonal distrust does not necessarily prevent Rwandans from working together. For example, two-thirds of respondents agree that high levels of distrust are not an impediment for Rwandans to work together on community development projects”*. In terms of building sustainable development, the distrust here mentioned can hinder efforts for a promising future. This social context calls for more initiatives to work alongside the existing community development project and facilitate the process of rebuilding trust and consistently moving towards a vibrant reconciled and prosperous society.

In an effort to address the issues of interpersonal distrust, the NURC initiated the National Unity and Reconciliation Week in 2008, to be celebrated annually all over the country. In 2012, the authority and residents of Rulindo district joined the rest of the country and celebrated the week, from 9th to 16th November. The closing ceremony took place in Gako Cell, Rusiga sector, on 15th November 2012.

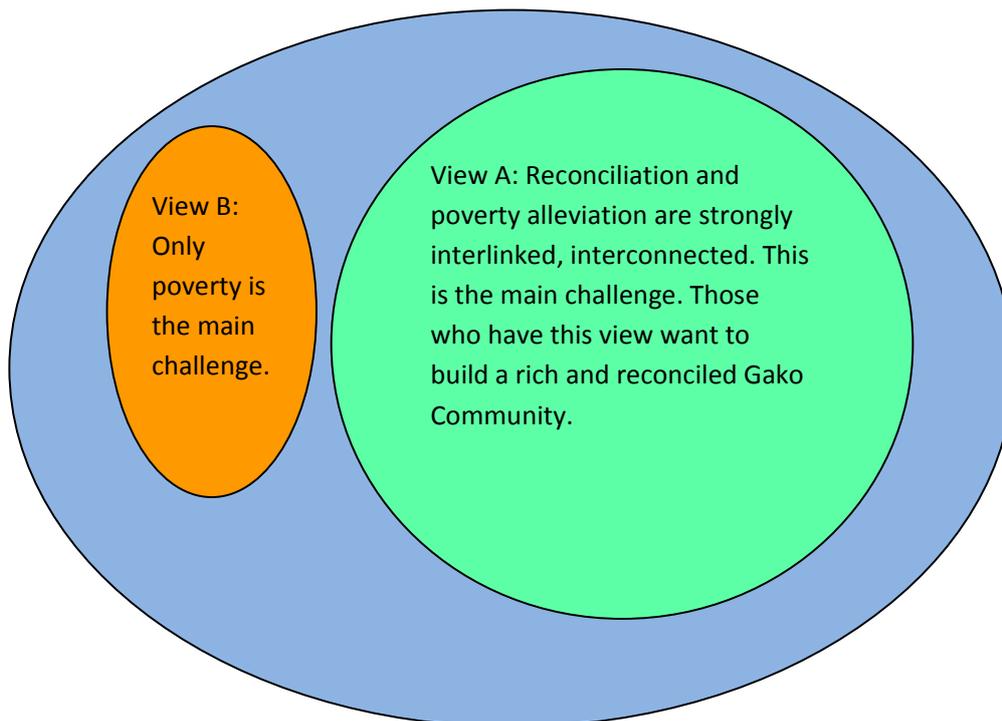
This report outlines the importance of celebrating the National Unity and Reconciliation Week in Rulindo District, the objectives of the week-long celebration, and the specific activities carried out during the week.

2) Why the Gako community was chosen to host the ceremony

The Rulindo district (especially in Rusiga and Shyorongi sectors and Gako cell in particular) was one of the most affected by the genocide committed against Tutsi in 1994. Many Gako inhabitants were killed during the Genocide. A considerable number of the community members were refugees in the DRC and other neighboring countries. Survivors of the genocide, relatives of those who perpetrated the genocide, the genocide perpetrators who were released in 2003 and others who are accomplishing general important labor as an alternative punishment are all living side-by-side in the same community and facing the monumental challenge to embrace sustainable reconciliation and social cohesion.

Local authorities and the district partners (including Search for Common Ground, Shalom Educating for Peace Rwanda, Commission Diocesaine Justice et Paix, Civil Society Platform in Rulindo, etc.)

have realized the necessity of working alongside the community and contributing to the process of building a prosperous, reconciled and healthier community. In 2010, Shalom Educating for Peace (SEP) conducted a pre-peacebuilding activity assessment on reconciliation after the conclusion of the Gacaca courts process. The assessment realized that Gako Community members have the following views regarding the process of reconciliation:



View C: People can be reconciled although they are challenged by poverty. This is another idea raised by SEP's team during the need assessment exercise. At the beginning of the assessment exercise, no one agreed with this idea. But, through discussions on the concept of reconciliation, some of them realized that although poverty can undermine peaceful interpersonal relations it is still possible for poor people to be reconciled.

Gako area community members have had this prime view (A) because they think that it cannot be possible to move toward reconciliation if those who have to repair and pay back what they robbed or destroyed during the genocide do not fulfill their responsibility. As they are poor and unable to find financial and material resources for the reparation (as it was decided by the *Gacaca* court), they think reconciliation cannot happen. SEP realizes that there is a strong need to help the community members to understand the concept of reconciliation. Although SEP doesn't disagree with the idea

of financial reparation, it seeks to help communities understand that reconciliation comes chiefly from forgiveness and repentance. These two elements are very important and are not 'buyable'. We may have money and repair what has been destroyed and yet not be able to repent. On the other side, I can feel unable to forgive someone who has hurt me, even if he/she repairs what he/she destroyed (if possible).

Rulindo District authorities are making efforts to help the community to sustain the process of reconciliation. Under the suggestion by the Unit of Good Governance in Rulindo district, the community has formed a cooperative – Twiyunge Rusiga Gako SACCO- where every stratum of the community is represented. The cooperative is actually formed by more than 219 members

Organizing the celebration of the reconciliation week in the Gako cell creates a good opportunity to evaluate and celebrate all efforts made by various actors intervening in the area of Reconciliation in the community. The actors include Commission Diocesaine Justice et Paix, Shalom Educating for Peace, Search for Common Ground, District Authority (Governance Unit), Twiyunge Rusiga Gako Cooperative, etc.

3) Objectives of the National Unity and Reconciliation Week

The celebration of the Unity and reconciliation week has the aim of re-enforcing the mobilization and sensitization of Rwandans on unity and reconciliation;

The event pursues the following specific objectives:

- Consolidating community ownership of unity and reconciliation processes;
- Evaluating the reconciliation process at grassroots level (within Gako community);
- Sharing the experiences of best practices and experiences of different activities undertaken by the community in order to promote peaceful cohabitation among Gako community members;
- Publicizing and disseminating progress made by the Gako community in terms of Unity and Reconciliation after the Gacaca courts process.

4) The celebration of the week dedicated to Unity and Reconciliation in Rulindo district in 2012

The opening ceremony of the week took place on 9th November in Cyinzuzi Sector and was headed by Madam Niwemwiza Emilienne, the vice-mayor in charge of social affairs.



The opening ceremony was marked by speeches, theatre, songs and dances. The participants reiterated the necessity of strengthening unity and reconciliation and consolidating social cohesion as a way of building sustainable development and a promising future.

During the week, different unity and reconciliation initiatives were visited. On 12 November 2012, a delegation from JADF (Joint Action for Development Forum, Good governance unit) composed by Pastor Sebuhinja Andrew and Mugabo Sakindi Jean Bosco visited a self-help cooperative named KOPIMUSHYO. The cooperative is located in Shyorongi Sector and grows pineapples. It is composed of 32 members from different stratum of the community including genocide survivors, genocide perpetrators (who have completed their punishments) and their relatives.

In the same sector, the delegation visited both Intwari (Heroes) and Abubatsi b'amahoro (Peacebuilders) Cooperatives. The two initiatives are accompanied by the Commission Diocesaine Justice et Paix, Kigali diocese of Catholic Church. The initiatives are focusing on trauma healing, creating community space for dialogue and economic development through self-help activities and small scale loans.

The unity and reconciliation initiatives visited in the Shyorongi sector have had a positive impact on the process of justice and reconciliation: they have significantly contributed to the process of executing judgments as decided by the Gacaca Courts. In Shyorongi Sector, 5,269 judgment cases were definitely executed.

On 13 November 2012, a delegation composed of Mr Rutayisire Tharcisse (in charge of Territorial Administration Unit in Rulindo district) and Jean de Dieu Basabose (Director of Shalom Educating for Peace) visited Twiyunge Rusiga Gako Cooperative. The members of the cooperative shared the achievements and the success stories recorded in the process of reconciliation and sustainable social cohesion.



It was time to celebrate progress made and reiterate their commitment to move towards sustainable and genuine reconciliation.

The delegation was accompanied by Baz Dreisinger, a New York-based professor and journalist and supporter of SEP. Baz is American with Jewish origin. Her father survived the holocaust. The cooperative members took the opportunity to ask her questions about the holocaust and the process of reconciliation in USA. They requested her to support their reconciliation initiative through equipping them with artistic skills in order to perform plays, poems and songs as a way of mobilizing community for peace and reconciliation.



Baz with the community members around the peace pole planted in Gako Peace and Reconciliation Memorial Garden.

On 14 November 2012, the members of JADF visited different unity and reconciliation initiatives in Mbogo and Murambi sectors. In Murambi, the members of local cooperative named “Tugaruke ku Muco” met the delegation composed by Donat Sibomana (the personnel in charge of good governance at district level) and Pastor Paulin Nkezabera from Reformed Baptist Church of Rwanda

operating in Rulindo district. The cooperative was initiated by widows who survived the genocide and the wives whose husbands played an active role in the genocide. The cooperative members shared the realizations and reaffirmed their commitment to building a reconciled community.

On the same day, another delegation formed by Pastor Rutembesa Faustin (from Pentecostal Church-ADEPR-church), Mr Theogene Niyonishimiye (the personnel in charge of National Academy-Itorero ry'igihugu – in Rulindo district) and Father Onesphore Ntivuguruzwa, from Rulindo Parrish of the Catholic church, visited TIG camp¹ in Mbogo sector. The delegation conducted a dialogue session on the process of reconciliation. The TIGist actively participated in the session. Such a session is conducted in public and has the aim of helping the TIGist to reintegrate community life after accomplishing the sentence.

5) The Closing Ceremony

At the national level, the Unity and Reconciliation week was closed on 16th November. In Rulindo district, local authorities and the organizing committee decided to organize the closing ceremony on 15th November. The celebrations took place in Gako Cell. As shown in the agenda (see annex I) the main activities of the day were:

- *Planting trees at Buseke site, near the genocide memorial of Rusiga*

120 avocado trees were planted. Before planting the trees, Jean de Dieu Basabose explained the link between tree planting and building peace. He emphasized the fact that planting trees doesn't only make our neighborhoods green, giving shade and beauty to our village for present and future generations, but also, it helps us to reiterate our hope for longevity since trees are a symbol of life and growth. When we plant a tree, we know that it will live and grow for a long time. Every year it will renew its leaves. As leaves, flowers, fruits, roots, etc are together on the same tree, it can symbolize the reconciliation and togetherness that we are looking and working for. Basabose ended his short presentation by recalling Lucy Larcom when she says that "He who plants a tree, plants a hope". Different groups -tudohorere, ca inkoni izamba, tubunge- will come together on this space, a community dialogue space, to plant a tree to represent their common commitment to peace and care for the earth. *Gutera*

¹ TIG Camp: TIG (Travaux d'Interet Commun) is done by people who committed the crime of Genocide and who, as part of their sentence, must do activities of common/public interests.

igiti ku butaka – bigararagaza icyizere ufite cyo kuzaramba kuri ubwo butaka Space of reconciliation and peace – gutaha infrastructure – Espace pour le dialogue communautaire



- *Visit to the Genocide memorial and Peace and Reconciliation memorial Garden*

At the genocide memorial located in Rusiga, the participants took one minute of silence to commemorate the victims of the genocide. Tharcisse Rutayisire reminded everyone that more than the 6000 people, victims of the genocide, are buried in the memorial. “As we celebrate our journey toward reconciliation, we must always reaffirm our commitment to working together for a real ‘Never Again’ and fight against any ideology of genocide and divisionism,” he emphasized.

- *March for unity and reconciliation*

The participants marched from the genocide memorial to the Peace and Reconciliation memorial Garden. The activity helped to increase awareness about the week-long celebration to the public, including to the users of the main road. Different media houses covered the events and helped to spread the message delivered.

- *Testimonies to the process of Reconciliation among Gako cell community members*

Faustin Rutaganira, Emilienne Ahimpereye, and Jean Damascene Bagaragaza, representing the Gako community and Twiyunge Rusiga Gako Cooperative, delivered their testimonies retelling the long hard journey they have done since 1990. They told the audience about the historical background of their community, what they experienced during the genocide and

how they have undertaken the process of reconciliation. Although there are still many miles to go, they recognized efforts made by different stakeholders to facilitate the journey.

- *Acknowledging those who have completed their Gacaca court verdicts*

There are different ways to measure the impact of community peacebuilding initiatives undertaken in Rusiga and Shyorongi sectors. One of the aspects of the impact is the unwillingness of some people to pay back what they damaged or seized during the genocide. After the Gacaca courts, there was a resistance to the courts' verdicts: in general, the compensation-related decisions have been difficult to execute. Presently, the executive secretary of Gako cell, Phocas Habarurema, says that RwF59,0000.000 has been paid and 676 cases were definitively executed. During the ceremony, he presented a certificate of completion to those who completed their assignment to pay back what they damaged or seized.

- *Presentation on “Sustainable Reconciliation for a Sustainable Future”*

Community members and other attendants were reminded about the nexus between sustainable reconciliation and a sustainable future. Jean de Dieu Basabose, executive director of Shalom Educating for Peace, explained the role of reconciliation and social cohesion in building a prosperous human society. He congratulated the Rulindo citizens on their commitment to building a reconciled society and appreciated the fact that the district authorities have given a space to the community for dialogue. This commitment to seeking reconciliation resulted in SEP being presented with the Global Peacemaking Award given by the International Public Policy Institute on June 2012 at the University of Kwazulu Natal, Durban, South Africa. The Award is an expression to recognize different peacebuilding efforts made by SEP including the Rulindo Community Peacebuilding initiative.



Jean de Dieu Basabose introducing the IPPI Global Peacebuilding Award to the community members, the beneficiaries of SEP's peacebuilding efforts.

- *Speeches*

Different speeches were delivered. Mr Tharcisse Rutayisire, who represented the Rulindo district, presented his gratitude to everyone who contributed to the success of the event. He recognized different partners who supported and organized the event. He encouraged the community members to continue the journey toward reconciliation and urged those who looted, seized and/or damaged properties to respect the Gacaca court decisions and cooperate in executing the Gacaca judgments. To facilitate the process of compensation in Rulindo district, if one can't pay back in cash, he or she must work in the garden of the one demanding compensation.

Religious leaders also delivered a message of reconciliation and strongly recommended the peace and reconciliation initiative undertaken in the Rulindo and Shyorongi sectors.

In his closing remarks, Pastor Deo Gashagaza, the commissioner at NURC and the guest of honor, thanked God for His Grace and comfort that Rwandans have benefited from during the hard and long process of reconciliation after the genocide committed against Tutsis. He recalled the importance and the objectives of the reconciliation week. And he reminded everyone that the community must take the opportunity to rejoice in achievements, and support one another on the reconciliation process.

- *Conviviality ceremony*

The ceremony was marked by songs, dances and educational theatre. At the end of the ceremony, maize and soft drink were served.



The participants are enthusiastically following an educational theatre presented by the Gako members.

6) Participation

Around 2000 people attended the event. In general, the event targeted all citizens of Rulindo district, the Gako Community members and particularly the members of Twiyunge Rusiga Gako SACCO (219 members).



The participants are listening to the message delivered by Pastor Deo Gashagaza, commissioner at the NURC.

7) The National Unity and Reconciliation Week's impact on the community

The peacebuilding programme undertaken in Rusiga and Shyorongi sectors has positively impacted the community. During the evaluation meeting of 21st December 2012, different stakeholders pointed out the following as the impact of the activity:

- There is an increased ownership of the process of reconciliation;
- Community members were made aware of support from different people and institutions, locally and nationally;
- Community members are supporting each other. After the event, the community members have decided to build two houses for homeless individuals;
- There is an increased sense of responsibility of those who have to pay back what they damaged, looted or seized during the genocide;
- There is an increased interest of community members in the Twuyunge Rusiga Gako Cooperative: presently, 20 people are applying for the cooperative membership;

- Inspired by the example of Twiyunge Rusiga Gako , the Gako cell authorities are developing a community organizing approach where people will be regrouped into small groups of 20-30 people and use them as a channel of communication for socio-economic development. The approach will be launched in January 2013;
- There is an increased sense of responsibility, partnership, transparency and accountability in the community development project: this event was co-managed by the community members, civil society, supporters and local authorities. It is not usual to find such a partnership where the finances – from bank transactions to payments- are under the responsibility of community members, the direct and end beneficiaries of the activity.

Financial report

Note: For transparency purposes, the financial support given by Search for Common Ground was submitted to the bank account N0 : 018-1200049/FINA BANK of TWIYUNGE RUSIGA GAKO SACCO open in Fian Bank, Nyirangarama Branch.

The summarized financial report (for the donation by SFCG only) is presented here below:

FINANCIAL REPORT			
DONOR :SEARCH FOR COMMON GROUND		Donated Amount: Rwf 900,000	
SOLIDARITY ACTIVITIES /MAXIMISING THE IMPACT OF RECONCILIATION			
DISTRICT : RULINDO			
Covering the Period: August-December 2012			
Number	Description	Granted amount in Rwf	Expenses in Rwf
1	Preparation cost: transport , communication and other meetings related expenses(water,..)	RWF 256,000	RWF 335,800
2	Planting reconciliation fruits trees (Avocado)	0	0
	Purchase of 120 fruit trees & transport	RWF 115,000	RWF 97,000
3	Post Event Evaluation Meeting through Joint Mid Term Planning Session for “TWIYUNGE RUSIGA GAKO SACCO”Team Leaders and its Partners	RWF 250,000	RWF 267,000
4	Repos writing both narrative and financial, Action Plan for Twiyunge Rusiga Gako Sacco and over all Coordination, M&E activities incentives for..	RWF 250,000	RWF 164,000
5	Other logistics expenses related to local transports, Bank Charges, loading and off loading, etc.	RWF 29,000	RWF 36,200
	Total	RWF 900,000	RWF 900,000

Appendices:

Appendix 1: Event organization and management team

The event is being co-organized and co-managed by the community members, partners and local authorities. The preparatory meeting of 14 September 2012 established the following event managing teams:

Team A is in charge of finances and composed of:

- Jean Pierre Sebakara Amani(President , Twiyunge Rusiga Gako SACCO)
- Nyirabavugwaruta Seraphine (Treasurer, Twiyunge Rusiga Gako SACCO)
- Nyirabantu Julienne (Secretary, Twiyunge Rusiga Gako SACCO)
- Munyaneza Gonzage (Representative of Rusiga sector authority)
- Tharicisse Rutayisire (Representative of District authority)
- Kaligirwa Annonciata (Coordinator, Commission Diocesain Paix et Justice)

Team B is in charge of the event organization and composed of:

- Jean de Dieu Basabose, Representative of Shalom Educating for Peace
- Mugabo Sakindi, President of Civil society Platform in Rulindo District
- Representatives of Rusiga sector (Mukakabano Kevine, SACCO Imbarutso) and Shyorongi(Rushingabigwi Marcel , President of Reconciliation Forum and Mpabuka Phocas, V/P of the Reconciliation forum of Shyorongi sector)
- Niyonshimira Theogene, Coordinator of Itorero in Rulindo district
- Director of studies at IBB
- Mujawimana Suzanne , Representative AVEGA in Rulindo district
- Habarurema Phocas, Executive secretary of Gako cell
- Members of the Team A (all).

Appendix 2: Agenda for the unity and reconciliation week closing ceremony

Hour	Activity	Responsible
09h00 - 10h00	Arrival of community members from Rusiga, Shyorongi and other sectors of Rulindo district.	Villages leaders in Gako cell, leaders of peacebuilders clubs in Shyorongi sector.
10h00 – 10h15	Arrival of other invitees	invitees
10h15 -10h45	Planting trees at Buseke site, near by the genocide memorial of Rusiga	Participants.
10h45 – 11h15	Visit to the Genocide memorial and Peace March (from the genocide memorial to Peace and Reconciliation memorial Garden)	Participants
11h15- 11h25	National Anthem	Participants
11h25 -11h30	Welcoming speech	Executive secretary of Rusiga sector
11h30-11h40	Song & Poem	Members of Twiyunge Rusiga Gako SACCO, students from G.S. Rusiga
11h40 -11h50	Testimonies to the process of Reconciliation among Gako cell community members.	Two participants from Twiyunge Rusiga Gako SACCO.
11H50-12h00	Proceeding to executing Gacaca court	Executive secretary of Gako cell

	sentenced judgements	
12h00 -12h10	Theater, song & poem	Gako Youth Peace Club
12h10- 12h25	Presentation on this year's theme: " <i>Sustainable Reconciliation for a Sustainable Future</i> ". And introduction of Global Peacebuilding Award by the IPPI	Representative of Shalom Educating for Peace
12h25 – 12h40	Speech	The Representative of the Rulindo District authority
12h40 – 12h50	Closing remarks	Guest of Honor
12h50 -13h00	Prayer for Peace on Earth	Representative of religions operating in Rulindo district.
13h00	Convivial ceremony and reception	Twiyunge Rusiga Gako SACCO.