

Survivors as Actors of Change for Peace and Reconciliation

Intermediaries and Beneficiaries of IBUKA tell their Stories of Change



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Introduction

In order to find out more about the impact of the organisations' projects and reconciliation needs in society, IBUKA has started to conduct an evaluation study. In the following some exemplary stories are selected to show the most significant changes, which have happened at the level of the intermediaries and at the level of their target group: the community.

The study is still in process, thus, the provided stories were selected randomly and do not exhaustively cover the wide variety of people benefitting from IBUKA projects.

Management of Community Conflicts

General Information

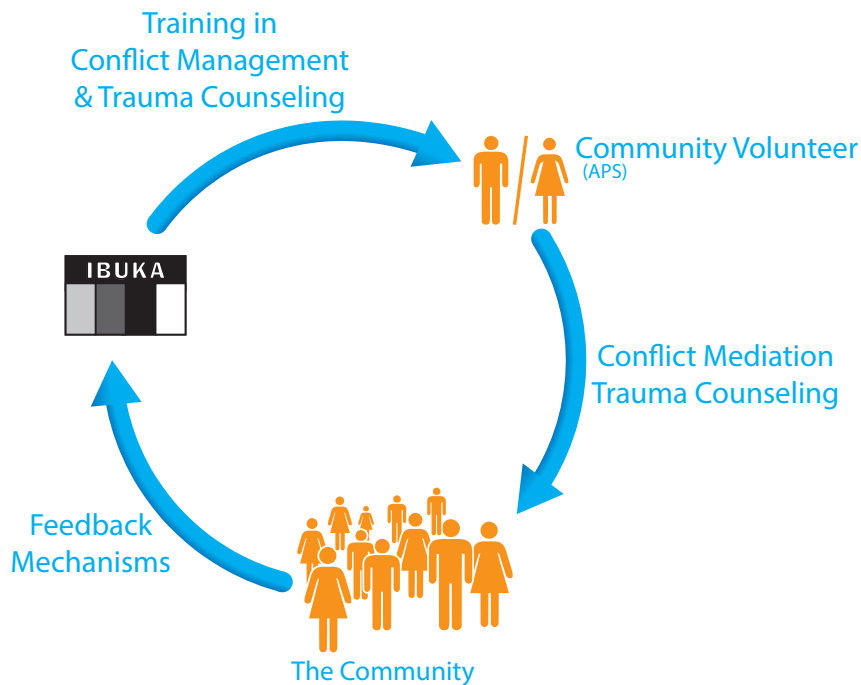
Implementation Period:	September 2011 – December 2013
Zone of Intervention:	Huye, Gisagara, Nyaruguru
Implementation Costs:	80 Mio FRW (88.000 Euro)
Supported by:	GIZ – ZFD, Jensen Foundation

Project Outline

90 community volunteers so called APS (Animateur Psychosocial) were empowered by IBUKA through training in methods of conflict management and trauma counseling. They intervene on behalf of the community in order to solve different kinds of interpersonal and internal conflicts. They contribute to the prevention of violence and they sensitize the people on the interlinkages between trauma and conflict. The APS meet on a regular basis with IBUKA psychologists in order to share the challenges they encounter and discuss possible solutions together. Through this feedback mechanism IBUKA has developed interdisciplinary knowledge on community needs with regard to peace and reconciliation.

General Results

- Within one year the APS have received around 2000 cases of trauma and conflict issues - 71% of the clients were female
- APS deal with GBV cases (39%), land right cases (19%), economic problems (14%) and trauma (23%)
- In 49% of the cases the situation was solved, 27% of cases are still accompanied, 23% were transferred to other institutions
- In around 20% of the family conflicts physical violence had occurred and was stopped through the interventions by the APS
- During the commemoration period the APS assisted around 850 people suffering from trauma outbreaks



Overall Objective

A sustainable network of community volunteers is established, which supports the people to deal with trauma and conflicts in order to enhance peaceful coexistence in the Rwandan society.

The story of Beatrice & Joseph

Beatrice and Joseph are an elderly couple living in the South of Rwanda. They were interviewed apart from each other, both telling their story as if they were still astonished themselves about how their lives have changed.

Beatrice is a survivor who lost her whole family during the genocide. In 1996 her husband Joseph was sentenced to 9 years in prison for his participation in the genocide. Beatrice had always been a housewife, who had cared for her 7 children and her husband, but barely left her home. Now, all alone without husband and family, Beatrice was struggling to make ends meet: First she sold most of their belongings, including their cows and household items, later she moved to Ndora, the nearest city to her village. There she was trained as a health worker and became member of a cooperative of health. She travelled to trainings all over the country and got to know many different people. She even started writing poems to ease her soul of the heavy memories of the past and became so successful that she was invited to participate in national competitions.

When Joseph was released from



prison in 2005, he had already heard many rumors about his wife, who had allegedly got out of control. He found her still working and living in the city and travelling a lot. He disapproved of her new life and was especially unhappy that she was often returning home late in the evening and not informing him properly about her activities. In short, he felt disrespected and minimised by her. He started drinking a lot and shouting bad words on Beatrice and the children. In 2011 Beatrice talked to APS Antoinette about her problems with Joseph. Thus, Antoinette approached him and tried to show him the benefits of a working wife. After this, Antoinette started mediating between him and Beatrice, so that they could express their views

freely for the first time. Joseph: “Antoinette is a real mediator, she gives everyone the possibility to express the truth about everything.”

Beatrice started to understand her husband’s perspective. She changed her behaviour insofar, that she informs him now about her activities and comes home before night falls. For the first time, Joseph was able to accept his wife’s independence. Now he supports her in her activities, he lets her participate in trainings and even stopped drinking. Their relationship has profoundly changed as they cooperate and talk openly to each other.

The story of Donathe & Emmanuel

Donathe is a farmer in Gisagara. He owns one field, which he inherited from his father, who himself had inherited it from his father. The livelihood of Donathe and his family depends on that one field. When one day his neighbours Emmanuel approached him and claimed himself the rightful owner of that field, he was dreading that he might lose everything. Emmanuel demanded proof that his own grandfather had sold the land to Donathe's grandfather many years ago. Donathe knew that the transfer had taken place, but unfortunately, he had no documentation of the transfer. Therefore, Emmanuel could not accept that somebody was cultivating on the field that he considered to be his own.

Donathe tried to keep on cultivating, but every time he went to his field, he expected Emmanuel to come. He prepared himself to kill Emmanuel with his machete. And Emmanuel himself came with his axe or his machete in order to kill Donathe. They started chasing each other through the fields. The situation got worse and worse – they both were so preoccupied by the conflict that they stopped cultivating. Donathe spent many nights in



front of the house of Emmanuel, waiting for his opponent to come out, so that he could murder him.

At this point APS Antoinette heard about the conflict. As an emergency intervention, she told Emmanuel to stay home at night and asked Donathe to sleep at her place, so that he would not be able to go to Emmanuel's house. She sat down with each of them and listened to their stories. Afterwards, she explained to Emmanuel that it is recognised by everybody that the field had been sold by Emmanuel's grandfather to Donathe's grandfather. Emmanuel accepted his defeat and stopped claiming to be the rightful owner. They both stopped their attempts to kill each other.

Donathe explains the importance of Antoinette's intervention: "If she had not been there, one of us would be dead or hurt and the other would be in prison. Actually, nobody would be able to cultivate the field we were fighting about." After some time the two men met at a function in their village and started talking for the first time about the conflict. They agreed that they had both misbehaved and had not been able to control their rage. Emmanuel apologized giving Donathe a goat as a present. Donathe accepted and thanked Emmanuel for the goat. They slowly started rebuilding their relationship as neighbours and refer to each other as brothers nowadays. If one is sick they call each other for support, they go to parties together and collaborate with each other.



APS Antoinette

Sector: Ndora
Profession: Farmer
Clients: 33

"Reconciliation means for me that there is no fear between the people and everybody can approach everybody without suspicion and mistrust."

The story of Francine

Francine's is a 31 year old woman living in the countryside in Maraba, Huye. She is a genocide survivor married to a Hutu having two children with him. The father of her husband was acquitted to 15 years in prison during Gacaca for his participation in genocide. When he came out of prison in 2009 and saw that his son had married a Tutsi-Woman, he was shocked. He did not want to have a Tutsi in his family. He started living in the direct neighborhood of the couple constantly insulting Francine and threatening to kill her. One day he ran after her with a machete and only the brave intervention of the husband, his mother and some neighbors could protect Francine.

She was very scared and started to suffer psychologically from the situation. The memories from the genocide came back and made her sleepless and nervous. Also the relationship with her husband cooled down. Despite of his support Francine couldn't trust anybody in the family anymore, and she was about to flee from her home. Additionally, her father-in-law tried to influence her husband and made him doubt the relationship with his wife.



Francine and her husband went to see the APS Judith. Judith initiated a community meeting involving the family, the surrounding neighbors and the local authorities. Together, they tried to convince the uncle to change his behavior, but he just repeated his threats and refused to search for a peaceful solution. In order to prevent that further harm could be done to Francine, Judith supported the couple to report the case to the police. The father-in-law was sentenced to one year in prison. In the prison the other inmates laughed about him and they convinced him that he was adhering to the wrong ideology. While the father-in-law was in prison Judith mediated in between Francine and her husband to re-establish

trust. She also taught relaxation exercises to Francine, so that she could finally overcome her fears. When her father-in-law came out of prison, he wanted to reconcile with Francine. In front of the whole family and the neighbors, he brought her banana beer as a formal apology. Thanks to the continuous support of Judith, Francine was ready to accept his gesture and forgive him. Now they live close to each other, as a reunited family. Francine is not afraid anymore and sleeps with a calm heart.

APS Judith



Sector: Maraba

Profession: Saleswoman

Clients: 57

« Reconciliation means for me that people contribute to the development of the society thanks to mutual exchange and peaceful cohabitation. »

The stories of Christine & Yohani

Jeanne and Christophe work as APS in Huye sector. In their community survivors of the genocide and perpetrators, who have recently returned from prison, are now living together in the same neighborhoods again. They discovered, that there are similar needs, worries and wishes nowadays of people who had been separated by political propaganda and horrible violence in the past. This made them initiate a group where survivors and ex-prisoners can find a secure space to meet and exchange on how they can peacefully live together in the future. Since the group has started two years ago, many people have asked to join. The stories of two members of the group will illustrate the results of the work of these APS.

Christine is 43 years old and a widow. Her husband was killed in the genocide shortly after they had celebrated their wedding. Christine stayed behind alone with the responsibility for her only child. Having witnessed the murder of her husband she was traumatised. She fell silent and in her mind she constantly repeated how the perpetrators have offended and threatened her and her child. Everytime she saw a Hutu she felt fear and hatred. This made her hide her child, whenever a Hutu neighbor came close to her house. Her symptoms got worse, especially during commemoration times. She shut herself away more and more from social contacts and fell into total silence. She was deeply afraid of people belonging to the other ethnicity and avoided any encounter with them. She didn't even want to take part in



Christine (left), Yohani (right) with two other members of the group

umuganda (community work) anymore, considering it as a task solely for Hutu through which they pay back for the harm they have done.

APS Jeanne came in contact with Christine, while helping her to calm down from an anxiety attack during the commemoration ceremonies. Jeanne visited her at her home many times, where they were talking about her personal history and her current situation. Jeanne

showed her that she does not have to live in suffering and fear anymore, but that Christine could even contribute to a more peaceful society, which will prevent that something like genocide can ever reproduce again.

First hesitant and silent, Christine started participating in some of the group meetings in Huye sector. She was constantly accompanied by Jeanne and after the meeting they analyzed together Christine's experiences. Christine realized that she is not alone with her fears. Together with the other members of the group, she learnt how to deal with her trauma symptoms in a better way and how to become an active member of society through community work. Next to income generating activities, they work together in order to jointly achieve reimbursements for property damaged during the genocide. She has no problems in talking to people from the other ethnicity anymore; she explicitly pursues it, as she has recognized its importance for reconciliation. Although she hasn't considered this as being possible in advance, she now feels much stronger and productive as an integrated member of a reconciled group.

Yohani has been imprisoned after the genocide. In prison he was taught about the importance of living and working together in a reunited community. But when he first came back to his village, he was scared. He was scared of not being accepted anymore and being considered a bad person. He wanted to meet and talk to others, but he experienced the community as repulsive and hesitant towards him. Then Jeanne and Christophe approached him and told him about the group. They invited him to join and from this day onwards Yohani's life changed. In the group people talk and support each other. They provide mutual assistance in cultivating their fields and they even help each other out in financial matters.

"I started to love again", this is how Yohani is describing the greatest change after entering the group. Now he can live together with others in a community as before the genocide had happened. Through the exchange with others he feels understood and he can always ask for advice. "In this group everybody puts their skills and ideas together, which at the end leads to a much better result for all of us."

The story of Epiphanie

Epiphanie is a 53 year old farmer living in the sector of Rwaniro (Huye). She refers to herself as a widow, not knowing the whereabouts of her husband. Her story dates back to 1994, when Epiphanie, her husband and their children had to leave Rwanda. While they were fleeing, Epiphanie was separated from her husband and stayed alone with her two daughters and her son. But staying alone with the children outside of Rwanda proved to be difficult, so she decided to return to her village. She found that everything had been destroyed, but slowly she managed to regain her life there. Fourteen years later her husband came back and with him a new woman and four children. They all moved in together, but after a short time her husband moved outside of Rwanda again leaving the two women with their seven children alone.

During the program of imidugudu, Epiphanie planned to sell the land originally owned by her husband as she wanted to resettle to a new village. At this point the other woman started claiming a part of the land to sell it herself and was supported by their neighbours in her claims. Unable to fulfil her plans Epiphanie



had to stay with the other woman in the same house. This situation was unbearable for her and she started developing symptoms of depression, because of the conflict. She was restless and often she could neither sleep nor eat.

Finally, she approached APS Emmanuel with her problems asking for advice. Referring to the laws regulating land and succession Emmanuel explained to her, that the other woman and her children have the right to own a part of the land of her husband. Epiphanie accepted to share the land with the other woman, sold her part and moved to the new village. They still live relatively close to each other and have begun to collaborate again. They visit each other regularly and share their sur-

pluses. After the conflict being solved, she feels safe again and her symptoms of depression diminished. “Now I have a calm heart and I can eat and sleep again”. She mentions, that APS Emmanuel always gave her hope, that the conflict will be over one day and concludes with the following words: “What enemies are missing is a person who can give them advice”.



APS Emmanuel

Sector: Rwaniro
Profession: Primary School Teacher
Clients: 55

“Reconciliation means for me that people collaborate in complementarity to each other and work together to overcome their conflicts.”

The story of Pelagie

Pelagie is sitting in the shade near the market place of Ruhashya in the Southern Province. With a clear and firm voice she tells her story.

In the genocide against Tutsi, Pelagie lost her parents and siblings. She survived, but, she had to suffer from different forms of violence. These events have left deep psychological scars in Pelagie's soul. Still, life went on and Pelagie got married in order to found a new family. But her husband was not good to her. After giving birth to the first daughter, she could not get pregnant again. He started to get violent, abuse her verbally and then physically. "You are not a real woman!", he said. At night he used to visit other women. The behavior of her husband increased the anxiety attacks which she was suffering from since the genocide. Pelagie had flashbacks and crises. The other people in the village thought that Pelagie had turned crazy. They were talking badly behind her back trying to influence the husband to leave this woman, who cannot even bear him a male child. Pelagie felt desperate and alone. She tried to run away in the nights and even started attacking the husband verbally. As everybody kept quiet about his own



experiences during the genocide, also Pelagie did not dare to talk to anyone about her problems, the violence and its consequences. She kept her pains shut up in her heart. Then, Juvenal an APS in the sector of Ruhashya approached her. "First, I did not want to talk to Juvenal", Pelagie says. "But then, he made me understand that there are a lot of women who had experiences similar to mine."

Pelagie began to visit a monthly self-help group of 30 people, that was facilitated by four APS together with other psychologists. There, she started talking about her past. As others opened up, Pelagie could finally break her wall of silence, too. "I realized that I am not alone because others have the same prob-

lems."

Through working with the group, she can now talk freely about the genocide. To cope with her flashbacks and other symptoms, she can rely on the CAPACITAR exercises, the APS taught her in order to relax. "I am healed now", Pelagie says. With people like her tackling their problems, there is more awareness in her community for problems connected to the genocide. During the yearly commemoration period, Pelagie now is even responsible for taking care of people who suffer from crises. Having relied on help to treat her own problems, she is now helping others.

As Pelagie managed to deal with her trauma symptoms, also the relationship with her husband changed. She realized that he had stopped being violent towards her and despite of the bad words of the surrounding community he has stayed with her. They made joint steps towards each other and now they manage to collaborate for the wellbeing of their family. They even support their child to visit secondary school.

APS Juvenal



Sector: Ruhashya

Profession: Farmer

Clients: 36

« Reconciliation means for me that people deal with the problems caused by the genocide and reconstruct their community again. »

The testimony of APS Rose

My name is Rose and I was trained by IBUKA as the APS in Mukura sector. I am a widow with two boys who still go to school. I am representative of IBUKA in Mukura Sector and I am the representative of a group called ABASANGIRANGENDO.

This group consists of genocide survivors as well as of ex-prisoners, who had been convicted for their participation in the genocide.

After the genocide, I wanted to do harm to all Hutus, so that no Hutu would survive. As I was refused to join the army, I had to find another way to achieve my objective. In October 1994, I became a representative of the sector. I was very happy, because I could exercise power over the population, especially over the Hutu. In that time, I thought all Hutu were bad, I wanted all of them to be imprisoned so that I didn't have to see another Hutu in my life again. I had no internal peace, I thought they would kill us again. I was traumatised.

A couple of years later our government introduced the Gacaca courts and the trials began. Actually, I thought no Hutu would return home. Unfortunately, those who confessed their contribution in genocide against Tutsi were pardoned and had



to participate in TIG. Others went into prison according to the crimes committed. Those who returned home after serving their sentence had to reimburse the things destroyed; they also didn't have internal peace. Therefore, in 2007 Association Modeste and Innocent (AMI) started to create a group for ex-prisoners and survivors in Mukura Sector. I was unhappy to see this. I thought AMI had come to protect Hutu. As a chairwoman of survivors in Mukura, I was able to control the participation of survivors in the group and the project failed.

Once, I met some Hutu children coming out of school. They told me: "We don't accept that you continue to hate us, the children of Hutu." I had taught my children to revenge, once

they would have grown up; I urged them to never love a Hutu, if I would die. But my children challenged me and told me that at school they are taught that we are all Rwandan.

In 2011, I had the extraordinary chance of having a training with IBUKA on conflict management and the approaches for helping traumatised persons. I learnt that conflicts can start internally and when they are not well treated they can result into an emotional crisis.

After the training, I directly went to the group in Mukura which existence I had tried to undermine for such a long time. I told them, what I have learned and I explained them how I had changed. I shared with them my desire that we all together can contribute to a sustainable peace - for the children in our neighbourhood and for our country in general. The members of the group and the representatives of AMI were happy to see that I had changed and they were eager to learn what I could teach them. Afterwards, we elected the committee for the group, which consisted at that time of 20 genocide survivors and 20 people, who had been imprisoned for crimes of genocide. I was surprised of being elected the chairwoman of the group. I accepted the vote and considered it as a call of God. There was an old man in the group called MIRANDA. He had killed my brother. I asked him to show me, where he had left the body of my brother, so that I could give him a burial in dignity. He asked me to pardon him although he couldn't remember, where he the body was. He had not considered that one day somebody would ask him about the place. I pardoned the man after he had told me his story, explaining how bad governance had influenced him to participate in these horrible deeds. Other survivors of the group pardoned their perpetrators as well. At this time, the name of group was ABAHUZA, which means "to mediate between two parties in conflict". I tried to mediate between parties about things destroyed during genocide and we managed to solve these conflicts in a good way. Afterwards, we changed the name of the group to ABASANGIRANGENDO, which means "road for sustainable peace". Now I see that building peace is possible when there is a will. Where there was conflict and psychological instability, there is peace now.

I thank IBUKA, that they have helped me to rebuild myself which enabled me to participate in the rebuilding of my society.

The testimony of APS Sylvestre

My name is Sylvestre. I am 36 years old, married, having 3 children. I am educated as a mason, but next to my job I am volunteering as an APS in Mbazi sector.

Before I have received training by IBUKA, I had internal problems myself. The memories of the genocide accompanied me and I reacted aggressively towards people who had committed genocide. For some time, I was elected as representative for the survivors in my community. Many people came to share their problems with me, but I didn't know how to help them. I couldn't help myself and I couldn't help anybody else.

In 2011, IBUKA invited me for the first training. It helped me to better understand the causes and consequences of trauma and conflict and to get to know methods on how to deal with that. Due to the knowledge my fears decreased and I started to actively apply, what I have learnt.

As a first step, I explained the authorities about my role as APS. I wanted to support people in the community to find solutions on conflict issues at an early stage in between the parties themselves. Only difficult cases should be trans-



ferred to the respective authorities for further assistance. In a community meeting I presented myself publicly to make known to the people, that I was there to help them.

This is also where I got in touch with my first client. A young girl approached me – an orphan who was in charge of her two younger siblings. When she told me her story she started crying and I reinforced her not to be ashamed of her feelings. We had several meetings and next to working on her trauma symptoms, I understood that her main problem was economically based. Although the most vulnerable members of society receive assistance by the local authorities, she hasn't been included in this list. I went to the respective committees

on village and sector level in order to raise awareness for the case of the girl. Together we revised the distribution of social assistance in the community. At the end, the girl was recognized for receiving financial support due to her vulnerability. As a next step, I gave her advice how to manage the money. She bought a pig and started to use her field in an effective way. By now she managed to finish school herself and can provide for the school fees of her siblings, too.

Usually, people from the community come to me to ask for assistance. The majority of my clients suffer from trauma symptoms or they ask for help in marital issues. Often the women approach me. They explain their problem and I am listening and trying to understand what the conflict is about. Then, if they accept, I arrange a meeting to bring both parties of the conflict together. There, they can share their perspectives and I can mediate in between them.

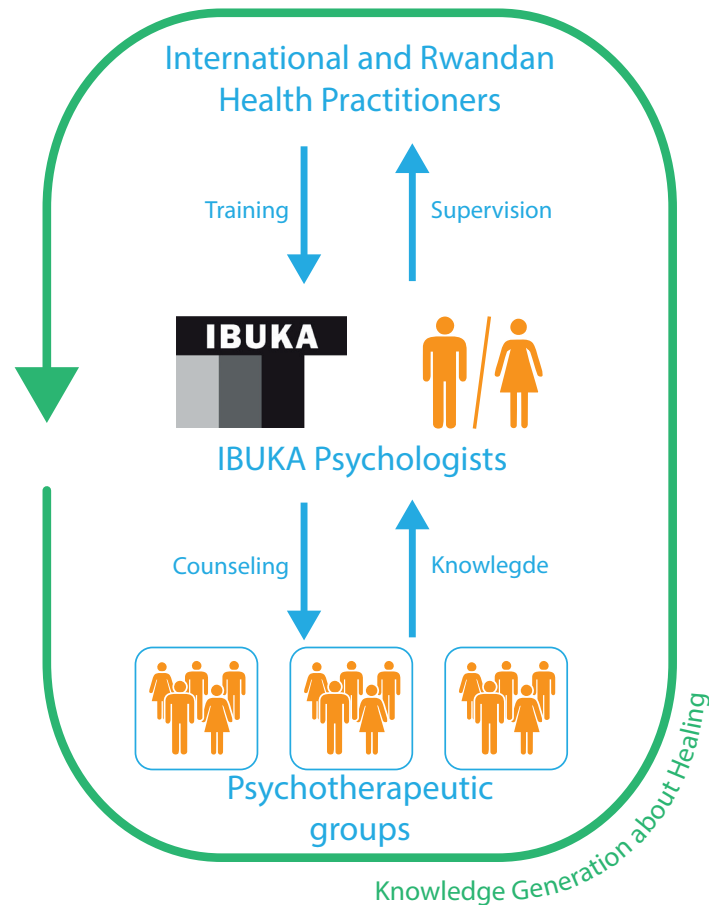
Thanks to my work as APS I have changed my behavior myself. I try to learn from the problems the clients have and take the lessons to my own family life. People appreciate me and my advice and I feel that they trust me. The love of the people has given me more self confidence and increases my wish to continue helping others.

Difficult situations for me are, when people are very stubborn and not willing to change. Only persistence can help here, and sometimes I am working with such a person for several months. Sometimes, situations are very sensitive, thus, I have to be careful, that the bad emotions are not turning against me. I am very carefully applying the methods, I have learnt, to make sure, that I don't get hurt myself or make the situation worse.

Furthermore, there are cases where no solution can be found within the parties. When it comes to a divorce for example, I transfer the case to the authorities, the abunzis or even the courts.

What I have realized through my work as APS is that the interconnectedness of trauma and conflict is very important. If the internal conflicts are not solved and people cannot heal, further conflicts in the community will emerge. If only certain people are healed, others will destroy the positive effects. Everybody can be affected by trauma. We have to work with every member in the society to contribute to unity and reconciliation in Rwanda.

Psychological Support for Victims of Genocide



Overall Objective

The project aims at the psychological rehabilitation of trauma victims and contributes to their reintegration into the community. At the same time, awareness about trauma within the Rwandan society should be increased.

General Information

Implementation Period:	September 2006 – December 2013
Zone of Intervention:	All over Rwanda
Implementation Costs:	120 Mio FRW (130,000 Euros) / Year
Supported by:	Médecine du Monde France, European Union, University of Bradford

Project Outline

At the core of the project are trauma victims who participate in psychotherapeutic groups. The groups, which consists of 20-40 people, meet twice a month for sessions of two hours. They are co-animated by two professional psychologists. Furthermore, one Animateur Psychosocial (APS) is trained in the near surroundings in order to support the facilitation of the group as well as the daily follow up and accompaniment of the participants. If necessary, the trauma victims can also ask for additional individual sessions with the psychologists. During Gacaca the groups were also supported by paralegals, who could address the legal needs of the participants through advice and lobbying. IBUKA puts high value on clinical supervisions and trainings for the psychologists and the APS. Herewith, they ensure the mental health of their intermediaries and they directly collect the experiences made on the ground. Thus, they are able to respond to specific needs and to adapt their methods accordingly. IBUKA shares these lessons learnt with other psychologists and mental health practitioners in Rwanda and worldwide.

General Results

- Overall 2876 clients have participated in group therapy
- 92% of clients have learnt to better deal with their emotions and symptoms of trauma
- Through sharing their suffering, the clients learn how to integrate and accept their painful past and look towards the future
- The clients are empowered to help each other through providing advice and conducting joint activities
- Participants of the psychotherapeutic groups help together to support other people with acute trauma attacks during the commemoration period

The story of Mariam

Mariam is 50 years old. She is disabled and takes care for 3 children. She has a horrible story to tell about what has happened to her in 1994 genocide. 20 years later she is still suffering from the consequences. Mariam has lost nearly all of her relatives in her extended family. She was tortured. The scars are visible all over her body; however, she says even worse are the deep wounds in her soul caused by the sexual violence.

She didn't want to interact with anybody; she was ashamed and full of fear. She isolated herself from her neighbors and all the members in her community. She suffered from outbreaks of trauma symptoms and fell into severe crisis especially during the commemoration period. This got even worse, when during the Gacaca processes the neighbors started to attack her verbally, when she wanted to give her testimony. The judge of the case was corrupt and it seemed that the man who physically abused Mariam would escape from punishment. Fortunately, at this time, Mariam has already got in touch with an IBUKA psychologist. This psychologist helped her to get calmer and deal with her emotions in a better way. During indi-



vidual therapy, they talked about what has happened and tried to put it in a larger context of her personal history separating the past and the present. The psychologist also brought her together with a "parajuriste", who helped her to claim that the case was heard again by a new council of judges from another part of the country. At the end, the perpetrator was sentenced and Mariam felt great relief that her story was heard and taken serious. IBUKA has also helped her to claim for financial aid at FARG and nowadays she has a house and a cow. She is interacting with her neighbors again, who help her to get a little income from cultivation despite of her physical disability. This helps her to feel integrated in the society again and continue living with a calm heart.

The story of Azela



The widow Azela is 63 years old and sits in front of her house in Ruhango District. She is all alone, no child or other family member was left to her after the genocide. She tells about her past, how she got married. But then the young couple wasn't able to have children. They waited for more than 5 years, and at the end their prayers got heard. Azela gave birth to a son and shortly afterwards more children were born to increase the family. But all that was taken from her in 1994. She couldn't accept her fate and the huge injustice which has happened to her. She tried to lock herself away from the world. She couldn't endure seeing the children of her neighbors passing by. They reminded her of her own family and what has happened to them. She totally withdraw into herself, eaten away in

sadness, moaning her personal pain day after day.

Furthermore, she feared the encounter with further perpetrators. "If one of them crossed my way, I started trembling like a goat in the sight of a hyena. I felt how my skin detached from my bones."

Azela started to participate in the counseling group of IBUKA in Ruhango district. Here she regularly meets with other widows who also have lost their children. She realized that she is not the only one, who was stroked by such a horrible fate. The women share their suffering of the past, but they also talk about their everyday life problems. They provide support to each other. Azela doesn't feel alone anymore. Also her fear diminished and she can now go out and greet all her neighbors. Breaking through the personal isolation gave her new strength, and now she can even participate in joint income generating activities despite of her old age. She has integrated her trauma and can now live without constantly thinking about her suffering.

The story of Justine

Justine was born in 1972 and lives in Muhoza sector of Musanze district. During the genocide she has lost all her family members and economic means. She stayed behind suffering from trauma symptoms. She couldn't believe what she has experienced – that neighbors have killed neighbors.

She had nightmares and flash backs. She could see the people which have been killed and sometimes she thought the killers come to hunt her again. This made her lose her consciousness or even run out the house naked. FARG provided her with a house in the city of Musanze, however, she had to live together in direct neighborhood with the perpetrators, who have killed her family. Seeing that they were still together with their beloved ones made her feel like a dog, who is not able to take revenge. She even tried to enter a military camp to learn how to use a gun. In her mind she was repeating the slogan "Iyo umuntu akubujije kuryama uzamubuze gusinzira" - "If somebody hinders you from going to bed you have to hinder him from sleeping." Her psychological condition got worse and she was seeking for protection in total isolation.

Justine got in contact with IBUKA, who provided her with psychosocial support. She became member of a psychotherapeutic group which she considers to be her new family. Here she could share her feelings in a protected space: "If I want to cry, I cry - if I want to laugh, I laugh."

She could also talk with them about her fears of the perpetrators and her wishes to take revenge. The psychologist of the group took care of her and helped her opening her eyes to perceive the good things instead of only seeing what was bad. Thanks to IBUKA Justine got the strength to confront the perpetrators and to participate in gacaca. She saw the family of the people who had destroyed her goods. They were very poor and she decided not to ask for reparations from them.

One day, the perpetrators came in the framework of TIG to work close to her house. She asked their supervisors to provide them with foods and drinks, because she could see that they were hungry. Amongst them was a man who had participated in the killing of her family. Justine approached him to tell him about her change and that she would like to live in peace with the whole Rwandan society.

Today she says that she is a woman who is well, who is not begging and who has a new family which is called IBUKA. "If this new family had not existed, I would not exist anymore."

The testimony of Psychologist Sophie

My name is Musabeyezu Sophie; I am 34 years old and a mother of two children. Since 2006 I have been working as a psychotherapist with IBUKA, starting with the project of psychological support during Gacaca.

This project offered psychological support for survivors through therapeutic groups. In these groups they could overcome their solitude and share their emotions as well as prepare themselves to give testimony or to listen to testimonies. We assumed that survivors were suffering from extreme pain during the period of Gacaca since they had been invited to speak about what they wanted to forget.

The groups are there to loosen the tongues of the survivors. By creating a space where common experiences are shared the members are enabled to talk. Through this, the groups can absorb the suffering that a single person alone cannot absorb. I've learned that my role is to stabilize the group and to turn the suffering into something constructive at the end.

After Gacaca we realized that the groups were responding to a problem going beyond the trials. They were responding to the con-



sequences of genocide and to the trauma on the side of the victims in general. Seeing this, IBUKA decided to spread our experience and enable the replication of the project. So I became a trainer of other psychologists and mental health practitioners.

The groups constitute a space where survivors could turn from victims to witnesses. Where the groups existed, survivors could bear being face to face with their perpetrators and the number of trauma cases diminished. In certain groups a form of solidarity develops, the members support each other if they are in need. After the accompaniment by IBUKA had finished some groups organized themselves in cooperatives to generate income, others

kept on meeting to talk about the difficulties they encounter and about beautiful and less beautiful things in life. These are all signs of re-established interpersonal relationships and a newly found mental health, even if it is still fragile.

For groups fragile as the one's of survivors are, the road to a reconstructed society is difficult and long. Through the groups the victims can find their role in society. They can get out of their isolation and eventually participate in the steps towards reconciliation. Therefore, the groups constitute an essential foundation for the reconstruction of the Rwandan society.

I encounter many challenges in my work. The profession of a psychologist did not exist before the genocide. At the beginning my colleagues and me were hit by feelings of powerlessness facing stories of violence, we did not know how to articulate and name the extreme forms of psychological suffering we observed in the field. Leading a group thereby exposing oneself to the stories of people carrying deep invisible wounds and trying to contain and transform the anxieties of the member can demand a lot of a psychotherapist. Through sharing these experiences with my colleagues and through continuous training I was able to develop know-how on how to deal with these cases. Co-animating the groups with trainers has helped me to strengthen my emotional, interactive and reflexive skills and to focus on what is happening in the groups and to absorb the suffering of others without being destabilized myself.

The continuous supervisions which we received were very resourceful, a space where I could reflect on the interventions and refine them, a space where I could get to know myself and my limits better, where I learned to differentiate between my own suffering and the clients'.

What motivates me in my work is to see that the people, who I have supported, find pleasure in living and that they start thinking about their future.

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