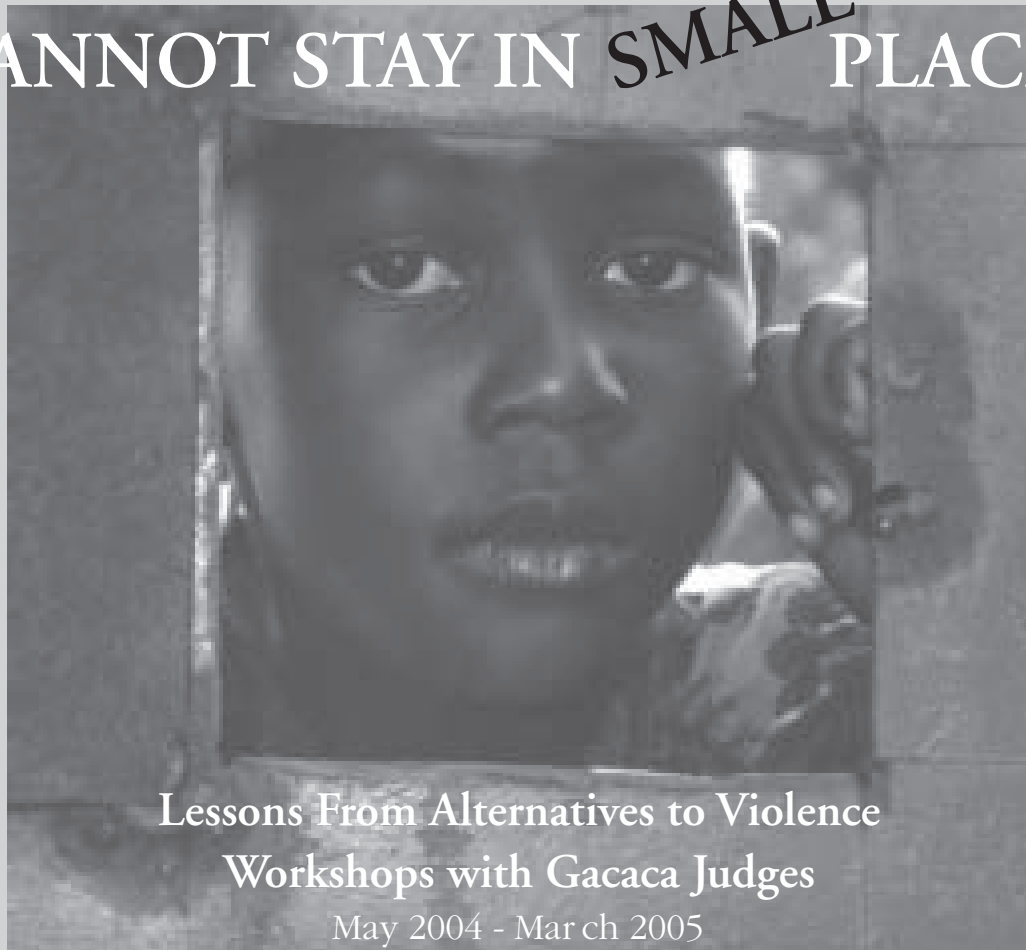


PEACE CANNOT STAY IN SMALL PLACES



By Laura Shipler Chico and Uwimana Marie Paule



A joint report from the Friends Peace House and African Great Lakes Initiative



The Friends Peace House

The Friends Peace House's (FPH) vision is a unified Rwandan society that has a vibrant culture of peace, which respects human rights, and which improves the living standards of all its members.

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Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the many people who contributed to this evaluation: the 37 interviewees – farmers, teachers, AVP facilitators, Gacaca judges – who often traveled long distances to meet with us and gave thoughtful and deep consideration to our questions; David Bucura, the AVP-Rwanda Coordinator, who arranged the logistics and ensured that we were able to meet with a diverse cross-section of participants, facilitators, and government leaders; the Friends Peace House in Rwanda that serves as home to AVP and was the site of most of our Kigali-based interviews; and the Africa Great Lakes Initiative of the Friends Peace Teams, which provided the funding for this evaluation and which has been working in partnership with Rwandan Quakers since 2001 to bring AVP to Rwanda. We would also like to acknowledge the work of Adrien Niyongabo and Peter Yeomans who authored an evaluation of AVP-Rwanda in 2003, entitled **“I Still Believe There is Good in All People.”** That evaluation served as an important guide for us as we began our interviews, and we have borrowed directly from that report to provide background information about Rwanda, Gacaca, and the Alternatives to Violence Project.

We would also like to thank the United States Institute of Peace which provided the funding for the seventy AVP workshops conducted for Gacaca judges over the past year. The opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the United States Institute of Peace.

We are personally grateful for the opportunity to witness firsthand the powerful impact that AVP has had on individual lives, on families, and on communities trying to heal after the tragedy of genocide. It was humbling to hear from Gacaca judges, government leaders, and community members alike that AVP has something significant to contribute to Gacaca and to the reconciliation processes of this wounded country. We have done our best here to capture and reflect both the dominant themes that emerged during our interviews, and the subtleties and nuances that were interlaced within those themes. There are voices that are not quoted directly here, but every interview has been used to deepen and enrich our understanding of the role of the Alternatives to Violence Project in Rwanda's journey to recovery.

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As we continued and talked to more and more people, we began to feel that AVP was not just a series of workshops that stayed confined to small meeting rooms. In Rwanda, AVP is beginning, instead, to feel like a movement: a movement of hope, of healing, of slow reconciliation, of possibility.



Executive Summary

“Peace cannot stay in small places,” said Ndagijimama Abdon, an elder Gacaca judge in Gisenyi, “it is good when peace reaches everywhere.” Abdon’s message of hope and expectation is characteristic of what we found as we traveled Rwanda to evaluate the impact of the Alternatives to Violence Project (AVP) on Rwanda’s slow recovery from genocide. As we interviewed more and more people, we began to feel that AVP is gaining momentum here in Rwanda. Again and again, interviewees issued a clarion-call for AVP to continue, to reach into every corner of the country, into every heart. Every person needs AVP, interviewees said again and again. Blanket our communities, reach every Gacaca judge, every leader, every genocide survivor. Go into the prisons and work with those who have been accused of genocide. Take AVP to our neighboring countries and help our region find peace. To the participants in this evaluation, AVP is not just a series of workshops that stays confined to small meeting rooms. Though AVP starts as a short three-day workshop, it inevitably ripples outward reaching small corners of each life in unexpected ways. Now in Rwanda, 4 years after the program was introduced here, AVP is beginning to feel like a movement: a movement of hope, of healing, of slow reconciliation, of possibility.

With funding from the United States Institute of Peace and support from the Africa Great Lakes Initiative, the Rwanda Friends Peace House offered seventy 3-day workshops in Alternatives to Violence to Gacaca judges throughout Rwanda. To evaluate the success of these efforts, we interviewed 37 judges, government leaders, AVP facilitators and community members. The reports from interviews were, without exception, glowingly positive. This evaluation seeks to move underneath this praise for AVP to discern why it has been so well received here, and to identify its major contributions to Rwanda’s healing process in the wake of the 1994 genocide.

Through the course of the interviews, four major themes emerged. First, AVP’s experiential methodology was new for many participants and they

reported that it helped them to internalize the workshop. As one interviewee observed, “AVP teaches people to have lessons in the mind, not just in the notebook.” At the heart of AVP’s efforts in Rwanda is the hope that the transformative and community-oriented nature of AVP’s methodology can contribute to the country’s difficult journey of healing and reconciliation. This, then, was the second theme that surfaced during the interviews: the role that AVP is playing in healing wounds and rebuilding after genocide. This is a complex theme, with interlacing questions of truth, forgiveness, and transformation. Without asking for personal testimonies or demanding that participants recall past violence, AVP quietly invites participants to begin to see the possibility of good in themselves and others, to seek truth even when it contradicts strongly held beliefs, and to find a deep source of reconciliation and transformation.

The third theme examines how AVP ‘culture’ and Rwandan culture interact, compliment and challenge one another. AVP is an imported program that, over the past several years, has been molded and shaped to suit Rwandan society. The interviews revealed that AVP both reinforces existing values within Rwandan culture (such as humility and respect for one another) and simultaneously challenges aspects of the culture (such as established hierarchies and top-down decision-making processes).

Lastly, many interviewees reported that AVP equipped them to respond to community and family conflict with creativity and compassion. While most interviewees were Gacaca judges and had been trained in AVP for the purposes of applying lessons to the Gacaca process, these same judges gave countless testimonies about how AVP had helped them in responding to conflict in their personal lives. It was through these testimonies that we discovered that AVP is not only a conflict resolution program, but also a quiet and unassuming advocate for women and children’s rights: many interviewees talked about how AVP helped to shift communication patterns between husbands and wives and stem violence in the home.

Introduction

Eleven years ago, the small African nation of Rwanda burst into the world's consciousness with its 1994 genocide. That genocide has been called, by historians, the most "efficient" in world history in which a million¹ Tutsis and moderate Hutus were killed in a period of 100 days. After the Rwanda Patriotic Front (RPF) overthrew the Hutu Power government, swarms of refugees fled in fear of revenge killings and the new government imprisoned a hundred thousand alleged perpetrators of the genocide. Now, most refugees have been repatriated and Rwanda has turned to the monumental task of healing and rebuilding a nation after unimaginable brutality.

In an innovative and controversial effort to bring justice and reconciliation to both the victims and suspected perpetrators of the genocide, the Rwandan government has elected to utilize a modern day version of a traditional form of arbitration known as *Gacaca*² to settle many of the lower-level cases³. With funding from the United States Institute for Peace and support from the Africa Great Lakes Initiative, the Rwanda Friends Peace House has offered seventy 3-day workshops in Alternatives to Violence to Gacaca judges throughout Rwanda, with the hope of preparing them for the difficult work of balancing truth with justice, and successfully reintegrating genocide perpetrators back into their communities.

To evaluate the success of these efforts, we interviewed 37 judges, government leaders, Alternatives to Violence Project (AVP) facilitators and community members. The response everywhere was the same: a clarion call for AVP to continue, to reach into every corner of the country, into every heart. Every person needs AVP, interviewees said again and again. Blanket our communities, reach every Gacaca judge, every leader, every genocide survivor. Go into the prisons

and work with those who have been accused of genocide. Work with those who still subscribe to genocide ideology. "**Every person who has taken [AVP] is changed,**" claimed Mukarwihura Anne Marie, president of her local Gacaca court, "it can bring peace to our whole country."

Another Gacaca judge, Nyirabagande Laurence, said, "If AVP had come before 1994, I believe that the genocide wouldn't have come to Rwanda."

Genocide is overwhelming; it is too big to hold in one's mind. Instead it becomes locked in images and sounds that churn in the memories of the people here – piles of faceless bodies across a road, screams, the constant smell of smoke, clothes sticky with other people's blood, the frantic calling of a child for her mother. In the wake of this horror, Laurence's belief that AVP could have prevented the genocide smacks of glaring naïveté. Too many forces were at play; the undertow of historic violence and oppression and power struggles were too strong for one small program to combat. And that is probably true. But through our interviews we began to witness the gentle radicalism of AVP. We began to see how AVP helps people seek the good in themselves and others in a time when there is a strong belief that everyone is bad. We began to see how AVP pushes against the established hierarchies and decision-making processes that may have, in part, contributed to the willingness of so many to follow orders to kill. We saw how AVP reaches into homes and helps stem the violence that is so often directly related to the trauma and rage and helplessness that result from war.

The reports from interviews were, without exception, glowingly positive. This evaluation seeks to move underneath this praise for AVP to discern why it has been so well-received here, and to identify its major contributions to Rwanda's healing process.



I. The Context: Gacaca, AVP and the Implementing Organizations

Gacaca: “Key to Hope for Peace in Rwanda”

The dictionary defines hope as “a desire for something to happen, combined with the expectation that it will.”

For the past two years, Rwanda has embarked in a process designed to seek the truth of what happened during the genocide, to facilitate reconciliation within the country, and to expedite the trials of the near 100,000 cases of alleged acts of genocide. At the heart of this process is the hope that it is possible to live together in peace after unspeakable acts of betrayal and horror.

After the genocide, the new Rwandan government arrested and imprisoned over 100,000 people accused of perpetrating acts of genocide. The numbers overburdened the legal court systems, and most accused have remained in jail without trial for ten years. This not only leaves the prisoners without a fair hearing, and the state bearing the burden of supporting them, but it also leaves survivors of the genocide in limbo, waiting to hear the truth of what happened to their families and to see justice done. It has been estimated that, without Gacaca, the cases would take up to 200 years to process.

Gacaca literally means “on the grass” and it gathers all community members in each small cell and each sector of Rwanda once a week to hear lower level cases related to the genocide of 1994. “Lower level” cases include those who allegedly looted, destroyed property, and participated in killing but were pressured or coerced to do so. Planners of the genocide, those who raped women, and those who killed multiple people remain in the legal court system. One Gacaca judge explained the system like this:

Gacaca was here in Rwanda even before. Gacaca is not here because of the genocide. It was the way Rwandan people and culture used to resolve their problems. Me, I am old and here there are others who are old. When the people had the problem in Rwanda before, they resolved in Gacaca because there

was no court. The court came with development, but before it was Gacaca that resolved problems in the family. When the family had a problem, they resolved it themselves. If they couldn’t then they went outside to Gacaca. What they call “*igisenge*” – it is when a problem between a husband and wife is resolved between the two of them with just two other people –

It was through these testimonies that we discovered that AVP is not only a conflict resolution program, but also a quiet and unassuming advocate for women and children’s rights: many interviewees talked about how AVP helped to shift communication patterns between husbands and wives and stem violence in the home.

members of the family or neighbors, but not many people. When a problem is not resolved in *igisenge*, they went to Gacaca, where they called members of the family, neighbors and friends to help them to resolve the problem. Now, Gacaca is not a new thing for Rwandans. *Rukamata Dismas, Gacaca Judge*

Each Gacaca court is administered by a coordinating team and tribunal of 9 judges. Each tribunal has a President, two Vice Presidents and two Secretaries. For the past two years, Gacaca has been tasked with collecting information and documenting the truth of what happened during those 100 days in 1994. On March 10, 2004 Gacaca officially began its judgment phase – hearing cases and deciding on restorative penalties, designed to reintegrate released prisoners back into their communities. A major goal of Gacaca is to seek the truth, and therefore prisoners receive dramatically reduced penalties for confessing the details of their crimes.

Conflict is an inevitable result of Gacaca. As prisoners return to their communities, old hatreds and pain are revived and new conflicts spring up over land, family,

children, and more. Fear and mutual suspicion mount as potential Gacaca witnesses and prisoners who are willing to testify are intimidated and, in some cases murdered. Survivors can be re-traumatized by the re-telling of what happened, and the wives of men who have been imprisoned for perpetrating acts of genocide may hear for the first time that their husbands are indeed guilty. Released prisoners may have to face false accusations and they might hear that others witnessed acts they thought were hidden.

“If AVP had come before 1994, I believe that the genocide wouldn’t have come to Rwanda.”

Nyirabagande Laurence, Gacaca judge

In order to support the Gacaca process and to contribute to its ability to promote reconciliation, the Friends Peace House launched an intensive Alternatives to Violence Project (AVP), training the lead judges in Gacaca tribunals across the country. In a span of 10 months, AVP trained 1,167 Gacaca judges in 11 of Rwanda’s 12 provinces.

Alternatives to Violence Project (AVP)

The Alternatives to Violence Project (AVP) began in 1975, when a group of inmates near New York City asked a local Quaker group to provide them with non-violence training. Highly experiential in nature, the workshop encourages participants to recognize that they can best find their own answers to the conflicts they encounter.

AVP workshops focus on the following themes:

- Seeking that which is good in ourselves and others;
- Cooperation;
- Community building skills: trust, respect, and inclusiveness;

- Communication skills: deep listening, speaking with clarity, and responsibility;
- Conflict Transformation.

There are three levels of AVP training: Basic, Advanced, and Training for Facilitators. All workshops last for three days and emphasize building community among participants. The Basic workshop provides an initial introduction to the concepts outlined above. In the Advanced workshops, participants choose the thematic focus that they want to explore more fully. Examples of such themes include fear, anger, forgiveness, or discrimination. In the Training for Facilitators, participants learn the skills needed to lead workshops on their own.

Implementing Organizations

The Alternatives to Violence Project – Rwanda (AVP-Rwanda) was established as a joint project of Rwanda Yearly Meeting of Friends (RYM) and the Friends Peace Teams’ African Great Lakes Initiative (AGLI). AVP is housed within and administered by RYM’s Friends Peace House, an organization which was founded in 2000 to be a witness for peace, reconciliation, and conflict resolution after the genocide and war of 1994. AVP-Rwanda is currently administered by a nine-member committee and has 58 active facilitators located throughout the country.



Member of the AVP committee



“ *AVP quietly invites participants to begin to see the possibility of good in themselves and others, to seek truth even when it contradicts strongly held beliefs, and to find a deep source of reconciliation and transformation.* ”

The Friends Peace House’s vision is a unified Rwandan society that has a vibrant culture of peace, which respects human rights, and which improves the living standards of all its members. Its three general goals are: 1) to build a sustainable and durable peace in Rwanda; 2) to restore the relationships that were destroyed by the war and genocide to ensure peaceful co-existence; and 3) to reintegrate the people who were harmed by the tragic events of this country. The Friends Peace House works with all sectors of Rwandan society and in all provinces of Rwanda, regardless of religious affiliation, gender, or ethnic group, focusing particularly on women, widows, children and youth, genocide survivors, prisoners, community and religious leaders, and grassroots and religious associations.

The Africa Great Lakes Initiative strengthens, supports and promotes peace activities at the grassroots level in the Great Lakes region of Africa. To this end, AGLI responds to requests from local religious and non-governmental organizations that focus on conflict management, peace building, trauma healing, and reconciliation. AGLI is an initiative created by the Friends Peace Teams, an organization consisting of sixteen Quaker Yearly Meetings in the United States who have united to support the traditional emphasis of Quakers in promoting a more peaceful world. Since its inception in 1999, AGLI has worked with the people

of the Great Lakes region on a wide variety of projects, ranging from international volunteer efforts, to the creation of AVP programs in Kenya, Burundi and Rwanda, to the introduction of community trauma healing work in Burundi, Rwanda, and Uganda. AGLI has also sponsored work camps in Uganda, Burundi, Rwanda and Kenya, established school scholarship funds, and sent long-term volunteers and consultants to work with local partner organizations.

II. Evaluation Methodology

Over the course of two and a half months (February – April, 2004), we met with 37 Gacaca judges, community leaders, AVP facilitators, and other AVP participants to evaluate AVP’s impact in four regions of Rwanda: Kigali, Byumba, Gikongoro, and Gisenyi.

We used a combination of one-on-one interviews, focus groups (with 2 – 10 people), and pre- and post-workshop verbal surveys. We also observed two AVP workshops – one in its full length, and one just partially. We chose to use a variety of approaches because we found that each format tended to elicit different types of responses: in individual interviews people were more likely to share personal testimonies while in focus groups the discussion of various themes (such as seeking truth or reconciliation) would often move deeper as one person’s response provoked others to

reflect in a new way. Several of the interviews were brief pre- and post-workshop surveys designed to capture participants' initial expectations and impressions of AVP, while the other interviews were with people who had experienced AVP anywhere from one month to four years earlier, to assess how the lessons of AVP resonate over time.

The interviews were conducted via translation, and we both actively posed interview questions, using our insider (Marie Paule) and outsider (Laura) roles to elicit the most candid and thoughtful responses possible. For example, Marie Paule would often ask questions about AVP and Rwandan culture, while Laura might ask interviewees to be as specific as possible in their examples of applying AVP lessons to their lives and work. After each round of interviews we would discuss what we had noticed, identify the themes that seemed to be emerging, and fine-tune our questions for the next round. A list of interview questions and interviewees can be found in Appendix 2 and 3.

There were some limitations and challenges that we encountered as we conducted this evaluation. First, language was a limitation because no matter how good the translation, nuances in both the questions and the responses are often lost or changed when working across languages and cultures. We minimized this by working closely together to interview respondents and to compile the findings. We taped most interviews and each direct quote was first listened to in Kinyarwanda, and then translated as carefully as possible into English. There were two interviews conducted in English. Those have been quoted directly, but the English has been edited slightly for grammar to ensure that the message is clearly understood. Secondly, limited funds made it impractical to travel to all provinces where AVP was conducted this year. Instead, we were forced to choose four regions that represent a cross-section of Rwanda. As a result, important themes or specific regional issues may have been missed. However, the responses to our interview questions were very similar across regions, and so we believe that the findings represented here may be projected to the AVP work done in the remaining seven provinces of Rwanda. Lastly, much of the data collected relies on the self-reports of participants

without external verifying information. For example, many participants reported ceasing violent behavior at home, but we were not able to contact family and community members to verify these testimonies. To mitigate this, we asked interviewees about changes they noticed in other participants, and asked government leaders who had not participated in AVP to describe the differences they saw in Gacaca judges before and after they had gone through an AVP workshop.

Over the course of our research, strong themes began to emerge and to repeat themselves again and again in each interview. After twenty-five interviews we had reached a saturation point, where the same themes were repeated without significantly new themes emerging (although each testimony gave us new insight and appreciation for the recurring themes). Therefore we are confident that, in spite of the limitations we encountered, the results of this evaluation are reliable and comprehensive.

III. Findings

The Findings Section of this report identifies four major themes that emerged in the course of the interviews, and then discusses each of these themes in depth. These themes are: Reactions to Workshop Methodology, Healing Wounds: Rebuilding After Genocide, Culture, and Responding to Conflict. It also includes a discussion of general criticisms that people shared that do not fall into one of the above themes.

A. Reactions to Workshop Methodology

“AVP teaches people to have lessons in the mind, not just in the notebook,” said Kavoma Patric, a community peacebuilder who helps organize AVP workshops in Gikongoro. Like Patric, many respondents expressed that the experiential, community-building approach of AVP was unique.

In other workshops, people go as they came. But in AVP, they see things more deeply. AVP is more open. [A person can] reveal what he did, even things he won't say in church. [AVP has] elements of openness and



Kalisa Eddy, AVP Facilitator

love, building a sense of family. [It is] more than theory. It is the model [of] bringing everyone in. Everyone is included, participating. When you include everyone, you get love, telling the truth.
Kalisa Eddy, AVP Facilitator

Gacaca judges have been the recipients of many workshops and trainings, but most of these tend to

be lecture oriented, and to stimulate only intellectual learning. AVP strives to stimulate not only intellectual learning, but also learning on the emotional, spiritual and even physical levels as well. Many respondents indicated that this approach was special, and that it had a lasting impact on their lives. In response to questions about what could be improved in AVP or what was not good, Mukarwihura Anne Marie responded, “Everything was good. [This] was the best workshop of [the] many workshops I’ve done.”

AVP methodology is useful, not only in peacebuilding but in other contexts as well. One participant told a story of how she applied AVP teaching methodology to her job as a teacher:

This school year, I got a job to teach. They gave me a class they called ‘political education.’ Before, that class was taught by a man from Congo and many students didn’t like that course. When I started, I found in the class there were few students – 10 or 15. I thought to use AVP methodology and transforming power, and students started to like that course and to like me also. And now those students are asking if I can teach other classes because they see me as a good teacher.
Nyiranzeye Sada, Gacaca Judge

In addition to the AVP’s general methodology, some specific activities were cited frequently as being particularly helpful. The most commonly referred to activities and lessons of AVP were the Tree of Violence, the Tree of Peace, and Transforming Power (see Appendix 4 for more details).

The workshop was very good for me because it taught how to teach others. Now, we learned about the tree of violence and the tree of peace. And the tree of violence, we found it has bad roots and bad fruits. And in us, we found that there are some people who have those bad fruits within us. But they taught us how to accept that good tree and how that good tree can remove the bad tree in us. In truth, that good tree can change us, and shows us how to be. And it is good because you can’t go and give good fruits if you don’t have them yourself. You need first to plant that good tree to have good fruits and then you can go and teach others. I need to tell you that AVP has changed me. As a judge, it will help me to teach others. Also at home, even with my friends, this workshop was very very important to me. *Mukandutiye Agnes, Gacaca Judge*

The metaphor of the tree is powerful in this culture of metaphors and proverbs, and AVP participants are quick to internalize the tree metaphor, looking deeply within themselves for the roots of violence and roots of peace. This introspection results in a profound sense of inner power and responsibility to slowly uproot violence and plant peace, both within and without.

The lesson of Transforming Power was cited in almost every interview, and guided respondents as they sought to replace the violent tree with the tree of peace. Transforming Power proposes that there is a power that is able to transform violent and destructive situations and behavior into liberating and constructive experiences. We may find that power within and without, but our challenge is to move into it to transform both ourselves and the situations in which we find ourselves. In response to the generic question, ‘What do you remember most about your AVP workshop?’ the response was almost always, “**Transforming Power.**” The responses were so rich, that these will be woven into the discussion of Healing Wounds and Rebuilding after Genocide.

AVP intersperses personal sharing and serious lessons with fun “light and lively” games intended, often, to teach a lesson or augment the content of the workshop. These games can be foreign to the culture – especially when old and young people are playing together. While

many participants like the games, some reported discomfort, and others said that they were not sure the purpose of the games. This suggests that perhaps even the facilitators do not always feel comfortable and have lost the hidden lessons in some of the games and use them solely as a way to have fun and energize the group. Specific examples of this will be discussed in more detail in the discussion of Culture, but it is important to note that many people said that though there was initial discomfort, by the end most people loved the “light and livelies” and asked for more:

Everything is good about AVP. There is nothing that should change. When the games start, some people may think it’s not good for all people. Sometimes the old people don’t like them, but when they start to play, they find there are lessons in those games. When they actually play the games, even the old people are laughing and having fun. You don’t need to take anything away. *Rugandura Celeste, Gacaca Judge*

B. Healing Wounds: Rebuilding After Genocide

At the heart of AVP’s efforts in Rwanda is the hope that the transformative and community-oriented nature of AVP’s methodology can contribute to the country’s difficult journey of healing and reconciliation. Eleven years later, the reverberations of the 1994 genocide are still felt at all levels of society. The economy and infrastructure still flounders as Rwanda struggles to establish a reputation as a stable country and to attract international investors; only 12% of secondary school-aged children can afford to go to school; entire families have been obliterated by not only the killing but also by high levels of mistrust and suspicion. In this genocide, neighbors killed neighbors, pastors killed church members, fathers killed wives, grandmothers murdered grandchildren. Even families and churches that have survived in body have been ripped apart by betrayal. It is not surprising that people in Rwanda tend to believe that people are inherently evil, that no one is to be trusted, and that “forgiveness” is simply an empty gesture to push the horrors of the past away.

Gently, AVP moves into these festering wounds. Without asking for personal testimonies or demanding that participants recall past violence, AVP quietly invites participants to begin to see the possibility of good in themselves and others, to seek truth even when it contradicts strongly held beliefs, and to find a deep source of reconciliation and transformation.

Truth

In Rwanda, truth is a keystone to healing. Many people do not know what happened to their families and want to find their bodies to be able to move through their mourning; wives of men imprisoned for committing acts of genocide live braced for learning the truth of what their husbands did; witnesses for Gacaca are being intimidated and sometimes murdered to stop the truth from emerging; people who participated in the genocide but have not yet been accused are fleeing the country, afraid that Gacaca will reveal the truth and they will be punished; prisoners who were falsely accused are hoping that the truth will liberate them. So essential is the truth to Rwanda’s recovery that the government has chosen to encourage genocidaires to confess the



Break time at an AVP workshop

So as perpetrators come to terms with their crimes, victims seek ways to genuinely forgive because the alternative—living with hatred and fear and rage—is too exhausting.

full extent of their crimes in exchange for greatly reduced sentences. The country needs these confessions, and the Gacaca judges who have been trained by AVP have the enormous responsibility of discerning truth from empty accusations and rumors.

The lesson of listening was very important for Gacaca because it will help people to understand and help people speak the truth. If judges don't listen well, that is in fact a form of violence, and they often don't know that they have done violence. *Rugandura Celeste, Gacaca Judge*

In the Basic AVP workshop, facilitators introduce an activity they call "rumors." In this activity, they ask five volunteers to leave the room and choose one to stay to listen to a short, detailed story. Then one by one, the volunteers come in, listen to the story from the person who came before, and retell it to the person who follows. Usually participants are practically on the floor laughing, tears streaming down their faces as they story changes and changes some more, to the point of becoming unrecognizable. This activity is cited as one of the most valuable that AVP offers Gacaca judges. Many report that after seeing how stories can change in the retelling, they will no longer believe hearsay or rumors but will go to the source. When we asked, "Before AVP, do many judges just believe what someone tells them, even if that person didn't witness it?" the answer came back again and again – Yes.



Iryanyawera Thacienne, AVP Facilitator

There are many changes [in the community because of AVP]. When you look at the judges, there is a difference between those who have had the workshop and those who haven't had the workshop... We have found that judges who have not taken AVP don't listen to people or take the time to understand or see if what they are saying is true or not true. Instead... they just write down what they have in their own minds. ... There is a secret to knowing the truth and that secret is in the game, 'Rumors'. It's not good to say that "I understand" [or I heard]. When people say they understand, it is good to ask them 'you understand from whom?' and go to see that person and ask them if what the other person told you is true. For example, a person can say, 'I understand that Patrick has killed someone.' Now, it is good to ask who told you that story, and then go to the source and ask if the story is true. Because sometimes you can go to the source and you find the story is not true. You can find that that person says, 'Patrick did not kill. He showed the killers where that person was hiding, but he did not kill that person.' The first person said I killed, the second story said I revealed someone's hiding place. So that is not the same story. *Kavoma Patric, Community Peacebuilder*

Rwandan culture holds a strange paradox: because of the history of betrayal, people tend to be quite cynical and slow to believe another's assertions, and, simultaneously – perhaps because direct communication is so expensive and impractical, and the society has relied on messengers for centuries - people are quick to believe what they are told. This tendency to believe information without checking its source, especially when it comes from perceived authorities, may have played a role in the genocide. It is possible that people were very quick to accept the pre-genocide Hutu Power propaganda, and, because they did not question its source, were more easily convinced of its credibility. AVP then enters into this paradox, teaching simultaneously that trust may be possible, and healthy skepticism is essential to rebuilding the country and preventing further violence. "At home, everything I was told, I accepted as true," said Mukarwihura Anne Marie, "but now I can be humble and look for the truth."

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Over the course of the three day workshop, some people begin to believe again that there is, at the least, the possibility of good. This is an extremely powerful element of healing. People have lost not only their families, their support structures, their homes, and their sense of security, but they have also lost their faith in human kind, and, in some cases, they have lost their faith in God.

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In addition to helping Gacaca judges discern the truth, there is evidence that AVP has also inspired people to speak the truth to help others.

During the genocide, there was a person who didn't have the heart to kill, but he sheltered a Tutsi who had been beaten. He closed the house, and the Tutsi died in the house, so the man had to bury that person. People saw him burying the person but people thought he was the one who had killed him. I wanted to help him, but I didn't have the power to help. I was this man's neighbor. The man was put in prison and is still there. Even me, they wanted to kill me. I am a [genocide] survivor. The man in prison has told what happened, and now I am also ready to speak about what I know and to tell the truth about what happened.

Birindabagabo Jean, Gacaca Judge

I met someone from Gahanga. I had been among his AVP facilitators, and I met him while he was going to Remera to tell authorities there that a man had been imprisoned for nothing. He was the accuser, and he went to tell the guards that he had falsely accused this man. I met him on the way. He said, 'After AVP, I felt a disease in the heart. I had dreams about what I had done.' *Akayesu Joyce, AVP Facilitator*

Restorative Justice and the Struggle to Forgive

In Gacaca, they have already trained us. They give us the rules and the way we should punish those people who have sinned. But what is different with AVP, is that it teaches us why those people have done those things, and those are the roots of that bad tree, the tree of violence. And AVP teaches why these people want to kill those people, and what the reasons were

for killing those people. That is what AVP teaches. Now, for us, we have an advantage because we know how to ask those people to tell the truth about what happened. Now all of us use the rules of Gacaca. But for those of us who have had AVP, we know how we can listen and the way we can help them to understand their own sins and to ask forgiveness.

Ruhanamirindi Gerard, Gacaca Judge

With the Gacaca process and the hunger for reconciliation and peace, comes a powerful pressure for perpetrators to repent and survivors to forgive. But forgiveness is like trust – it can be hoped for but not forced, and sometimes the very declaration of forgiveness, if it is given too easily or quickly, can in fact perpetuate the insidious mistrust that eats away at the fabric of society. So as perpetrators come to terms with their crimes, victims seek ways to genuinely forgive because the alternative – living with hatred and fear and rage – is too exhausting.

AVP offers a path toward genuine forgiveness – and that is to ask the question, “Why do people kill?” An answer that is widely accepted is that people kill because they are bad. This can quickly become the unspoken belief that Hutu, in particular, are bad. With its tree-of-violence analytical tool, AVP pushes participants to look beyond this characterization of a single group (noting the dangers of stereotyping one group so rigidly) and examines the complicated roots of Rwanda's violent history.

One respondent talked about a particular activity in AVP where, in pairs, participants place the palms of their hands against one another, and one partner is

instructed to push. Inevitably, the other partner always pushes back.

For me, it's OK because I learned where conflict comes from, the roots of genocide. The leaders told the people to push and the people pushed. They didn't think about whether it was bad or good, even though they have the minds to think. . . I am ready to forget. Those who are dead are already dead, but those who are alive need to live, but we cannot live alone. We need to live with other people. Before, we stereotyped each other because of what people did. Now, we look at the deeper roots. *Birindabagabo Jean, Gacaca Judge*

The value placed on seeking the truth can also help Gacaca judges and others seek restorative justice rather than vengeance. Many respondents reported that AVP helped them to listen equally to both parties rather than immediately take sides or believe the accuser. They reported that there can even be "tribalism" within the Gacaca tribunals, and some judges will favor one ethnic group or will disparage those with whom they have a history of animosity. AVP offers participants tools to be more tolerant, to be slow to judge, and to challenge prejudice when they see it.

When AVP started in Byumba, it was the period of collecting information. Before AVP people would come to court to tell their stories, and the judges would treat people badly and the judges would be the ones to hurt them, sometimes even saying that they don't care about the people giving the testimonies. Now, they welcome all people. *Ndamage Emmanuel, Gacaca Coordinator*

I am President of AVG [Association of Genocide Widows] and in Gacaca people become traumatized. When I was there, when I saw the prison, I didn't have patience. At that time, I cried and said many wrong things. But now, after AVP, I am more patient. Before, when I saw the prisoners' uniforms, in my mind I said those people should die. But now, after AVP, and learning how to listen to others, I found that even those prisoners might be innocent. When I see the people in those uniforms, I no longer believe they should die. *Uwanziga Eugenie, Gacaca Judge*



It depends on people's hearts. For me, after learning about Transforming Power, I find I can even forgive the people who killed my relatives. . . . When a person is a sinner, he can show you that he really wants the forgiveness and that can change you, because of that transforming power in you and in him. *Mukakabanda Juliette, Alternate Judge*

In truth, [I had] the problem of war in me. I had problems because I didn't have any forgiveness inside of me. But because of the workshop, I found that I could forgive and I found I wasn't alone: others had these problems. I found in my family I got peace because I found it was not only me who had problems. *Iryanyawera Thacienne, AVP Facilitator*

AVP is a hopeful program in a country where people are hungry for hope. Judges who have taken AVP, remarked Musabeyezu Charlotte, Vice Mayor of Byumba, are able to "create a climate of possibility" and to infuse the Gacaca process with hope for the future.

I need to speak to that question, to talk about those people who haven't had AVP training. Yes, they have had Gacaca training, but. . . I need to speak about the AVP workshop. There is what we call Transforming Power. In Transforming Power, there is what we call a guideline that tells us to 'believe in the future.' Abdon



[a judge who has not taken AVP] is focused on what will happen in Gacaca or what he will hear in Gacaca. For us, who have taken AVP, we believe that good things will come in the future from Gacaca.

Nyiranzeye Sada, Gacaca Judge

Finding Good

AVP can bring people to know that they themselves are people. Because, before in Rwanda people could behave like animals. They behave like humans now. After AVP, people bring back love.... We were people who lived without love after the war. When we see people, we see no good things in them. But after knowing Transforming Power, people start to see the good in others. Now transforming power brings back the love. During the genocide, they killed my mother, father and our relatives. It was our neighbors who killed them. The killers were our friends. I started to believe that no one is good. So I isolated myself from others. It was my Pastor who told me to go to the AVP workshop. I didn't want to go because when you go to a workshop, you have to make friends and to have a friend is to bring an enemy into your life. But I decided to go for just one day. Then I ended up staying for three days and saw how people started to bring back their hearts to love people, and how they talked to each other and this started to change me in the workshop. [When the facilitators] asked people

to tell where they worked, I didn't want to tell them about my work. I hid it from them. But with transforming power, you can start to believe in the good in others. It helped me to start talking freely.... Then, with the two trees, I saw that nothing good can come from the tree of violence. So I decided to have that good tree. I started to have friends, speak freely, and to not be alone. I made friends through AVP. I'm not sure how it happened, but it did. *Nyiramajyambere Francoise, AVP Facilitator*

The belief that every person has good within is a fundamental pillar of the AVP and the Quaker approach that informs every activity and the behavior and attitudes of the facilitators. Through listening activities, cooperative games, and personal sharing, participants begin to encounter the good in themselves and then in others. Over the course of the three day workshop, some people begin to believe again that there is, at the least, the possibility of good. This is an extremely powerful element of healing. People have lost not only their families, their support structures, their homes, and their sense of security, but they have also lost their faith in human kind, and, in some cases, they have lost their faith in God. AVP staff and facilitators are inspiring in their unwavering belief that, in spite of everything, people still are good at heart.

As Francoise's testimony suggests, when one is able to find this good in oneself and others it can start to reduce the tremendous isolation that many people feel in Rwanda. Reconnecting with others is an important part of healing from trauma⁴ and this may be why so many respondents reported that they themselves felt "healed" after attending an AVP workshop. In Rwanda, peacebuilding and trauma healing are inextricably intertwined, and AVP's approach allows for both to begin to happen simultaneously.

Transformation

In Rwanda it seems that people believe, deeply, in transformation – the capacity of the human soul to repent and be renewed. Perhaps they have to believe in this possibility in order to live next door to neighbors who might turn sour without warning, but whatever the source, the openness to transformation is profound. Transformation was a clear theme throughout all of the interviews.

Every person who has been through AVP has changed. You can't find someone who hasn't changed because of AVP. Everyone wants AVP to reach another person. The good things they learned in AVP, they want others to have When you start [with transforming power] they don't understand at first. But then, on the last day people say that Transforming Power has helped them to understand the other [AVP] lessons and they start to understand that they have it already inside them and that sometimes they have already been using it and they can use it more, they like it so much. *Bihoyiki Joseph, AVP Facilitator*

[AVP] can teach people to speak the truth. How they can listen to people. You can use the 12 guidelines [of Transforming Power] in making judgments. I know we will do better than others because we've had AVP workshops. We can teach the perpetrators to speak the truth and how to repent. AVP helped us to be transformed. When you yourself have been transformed, it is easy to teach others: family, neighbors and even in Gacaca. This workshop with AVP, I want it to reach every person and it will help to build a good community in Rwanda. *Haguma Francois Xavier, Gacaca Judge*

AVP has wisdom. AVP helped me for myself, where I work, and even in the family. Transforming Power is what helped me to change. That is what changed me. The lessons of AVP helped me because before I was a person with anger and when someone made me angry I had a terrible temper. Because of this workshop, I have changed.

Nyiranzeye Sada, Gacaca Judge

The bad root I had before is anger. Every time I had a problem with another person, I became too angry. And because of that anger, I started to be violent. But since I went through the workshop I know that anger is not good. I found peace and love. It is what people need. And since attending the workshop, transforming power has started to work in me. *Mukandutiye Agnes, Gacaca Judge*

I need to ask for a workshop for the judges who haven't had AVP, because there are many things they don't know that can help them during Gacaca. They

were trained in Gacaca training, but there are lessons that they don't have like Transforming Power, Listening, knowing that there is good in every person, and knowing that a person can change. When you judge people one shouldn't say they should die because they sinned. You must know that they can change and become good people. This is why I ask for a workshop for those who haven't had it. *Rusigura Juma, Gacaca Judge*

C. Culture

Some AVP facilitators in the United States like to claim that AVP is not culturally bound and are quick to point out that the content is drawn from the participants of that particular workshop. They are eager to say that for this reason, AVP can serve people on any continent. While most of the content does come from the participants of that particular locale, the structure, philosophy, and the teaching strategies emanate from a particular cultural perspective. Though we acknowledge that AVP is culturally specific, it can still be received and be powerfully useful to people from radically different cultures. Best to relieve ourselves of the charade that it is somehow magically culturally neutral, and to put it in the hands of the Rwandans to perform a considered process of cultural assimilation and transmutation. Rather than assume cultural neutrality or fret over cultural imperialism, it is better to acknowledge Rwandans' ability to use what is familiar, experiment with what seems different but perhaps useful, and dispense with what is not wanted. This dynamic process continues today as it has since the first workshop.⁵



Pierre Damien and Elie

As we explored this dynamic, we found that while people acknowledged that AVP's games and approach to facilitation is culturally different, there was nothing in the workshops that undermined the valued strengths of Rwandan culture. In fact, many people commented that AVP could enhance or strengthen Rwandan culture.

For me, I don't see anything bad in AVP for our culture. What is wrong in our culture is to differentiate between people and to have injustice and no love. That is what is different in Rwandan culture. But AVP, they teach how people can have love, how you can love your family, your society, your country. And it teaches you how to resolve your conflicts and other things for everyday life. Now I don't see anything wrong with AVP in terms of Rwandan culture, because it has things to teach our society. It teaches when you meet these problems you can help. Please ask them to continue doing AVP.

Nkawika Jean Marie Vianne, Student

Some participants reported that, although AVP came originally from another country and culture, the content and approach is relevant to life in Rwanda. One AVP facilitator observed:

I thank the people who have created AVP, because they use the real things that happen in the family. Sometimes people ask me, 'Who told you what happened in my family?' It's like we did careful research in their homes before the workshop. This shows that the people who designed AVP did a lot of research about people and how they are. *Bihoyiki Joseph, AVP Facilitator*

A few of AVP's activities and games are particularly foreign, and as AVP has become increasingly established in Rwanda facilitators have chosen to drop some of them because they do not seem to work. Now, some facilitators are questioning the use of "Adjective Names" because they increasingly encounter resistance. "Adjective Names" is an exercise in which people are asked to think of a positive adjective which describes them and starts with the first letter of one's name. For example, Lucky Laura or Peaceful Paule. This activity is intended to build a sense of shared experience (everyone who goes

through AVP has such a name, throughout the world), help people remember one another's names, and encourage people to begin to relate to one another as unique individuals rather than members of groups (such as Hutu or Tutsi). The first difficulty with Adjective Names is that they do not work in Kinyarwanda, because of the complicated language structure: every adjective for a person must start with "umu..." Therefore, Adjective Names must be done in English or French. The second difficulty is that in Rwanda, names can have tremendous importance, and some people associate the giving of a new name as a second baptism and worry that AVP is undermining their Christian faith. Occasionally, facilitators find themselves imposing Adjective Names on participants, but report that later participants "repent" and see the value in these names. Perhaps this is an activity that needs to be revisited to either decide to make it optional, or to better equip facilitators to effectively manage resistance.

While general responses about AVP culture and Rwandan culture were very positive, two primary cultural differences began to emerge in the interviews. The first was the difference between "equality" and "hierarchy." The second theme was a direct off-shoot from the first: in the interviews, we noted that AVP introduces new and radical ideas about how to make decisions which has had a direct impact on how people behave at home, in the workplace, and in Gacaca.

Equality and Hierarchy

Rwanda is a culture of hierarchies: men and women, old and young, patrons and beneficiaries, rich and poor. As a Quaker program, AVP operates with the fundamental philosophy that all people have that of God within, and therefore all people are equal. This value is prevalent throughout AVP's lessons and games. As the quotes below show, the reactions to this difference are mixed. Sometimes it causes discomfort, particularly when young people are asked to play physical games with old people, but sometimes it can provoke positive change in how people relate to themselves and others.

As a facilitator, when we went for a training, we found that we facilitate all people – young and old people. I

found many times, they think the workshop activities are worthless, but the second day they start to listen and to love it, even to love the facilitators. The third day they don't even want to leave us. Now there is nothing wrong [for the culture] because if there were, they wouldn't like it or they would decide to leave.

Twilingiyimana Celestine, AVP Facilitator, De-mobilized Soldier

Nothing is bad for the culture, but the game for pushing, with old and young, wasn't good. But this made us all the same together, not old, not young. *Ruhitamo Jean Bosco, Gacaca Judge*

AVP is good for our culture, because it brings BACK our culture. Before, young people were humble to older people only, but now they are not humble at all. Now, AVP teaches people to be humble to everyone. . . . Old people didn't know it is good to be humble to young people, but in AVP you are together. *Bihoyiki Joseph, AVP Facilitator*

Nothing is wrong [with AVP in terms of Rwandan culture]. Because it teaches again very well the culture. It's good to teach the elders AVP so they can teach the youth. *Haguma Francois Xavier, Gacaca Judge*

Throughout the examples within this section, the section on decision-making, and the discussion of violence in the home, it is clear that AVP is an advocate for women's rights, directly challenging the domination of and violence against women. Male facilitators that we observed were quick to draw on examples of violence against women and internalized and externalized oppression in the home.

Traditionally, I had my beliefs. AVP allows me to continue my habits but it prevented me from doing other things. AVP allows equal rights between men

and women, so AVP liberated me from that. I used to bow down to men to greet them [in Uganda]. I felt shame doing that alone. As long as I'm with other members of the group [I didn't do it]. *Akayesu Joyce, AVP Facilitator*

Decision-Making

Directly related to the concepts of equality and hierarchy, is the process of decision making. When asked how they behaved before and after having attended an AVP workshop, many people reported that their ways of making decisions had completely changed from a top-down, hierarchical approach to a more participatory and consensus-based process. This was true in the home, in the workplace, and in Gacaca deliberations as well.

AVP should train those judges who haven't had the workshop yet. Today [the first day of the judgment phase of Gacaca], I saw something. When we were sequestered [to make a decision on a case], there was something I wanted to tell the other judges. When we were in AVP, they taught us that every person has something good inside, and you should try to understand the ideas of another person. Don't ignore them. When we were in that meeting, people offered ideas and others ignored them, saying there was nothing good in those ideas. In that meeting, the people who had taken AVP were trying to understand others, and looked for the good things in each idea. Now, I need to ask AVP to do other workshops soon for those who haven't had AVP. It will help us as we make our decisions.

Nyiranzeye Sada, Gacaca Judge

Before, I was the man, the chief of the family, and I made decisions without consulting others. Now, I consult others. *Ruzindana Mark, Gacaca Judge*

The interviews suggest that one outcome of AVP is that those who experience it are beginning to piece their consciences back together and to take profoundly personal responsibility for the future of their country.



Before AVP, I was a dictator where I worked. AVP helped me so much. I started to speak with people at work nicely and people began to love me. At home, I thought I was the chief of the family and that women have nothing good in them. I sat with my wife and talked and many problems were resolved because of that. Even just understanding others makes things better. AVP changes people because there are the 12 guidelines [transforming power]. When I have a problem, I think first and choose which guideline to use to handle this problem. Now many things are going well because of AVP. *Bihoyiki Joseph, AVP Facilitator*

When asked for the most important lessons she gained from AVP, Mukarwihura Anne Marie said simply, “to be patient, to speak the truth, to respect myself and to take responsibility.” That final lesson – to take responsibility – was not a lesson that other interviewees explicitly mentioned, and yet it is prevalent throughout their stories of standing up for others’ rights, of speaking the truth, and of looking within for the roots of violence before pointing elsewhere. Taking responsibility, it seems to us, is the flip side of allowing room for participatory decision-making. Because many of those trained in AVP this past year were leaders within their communities, they were often in positions to impose their decisions. While many of those interviewed said that they stopped being “dictators”, that shift then requires a change in their subordinates. It requires those being consulted to step up, to think for themselves, and to share the blame or the acclaim for the outcome.

It is not only dangerous, but it is impossible, to oversimplify the genocide in Rwanda, and to point to one specific factor that made so many people participate in such terrifying evil. But some have remarked that the cultural inclination to not only believe authority but to also rely on top-down decision-making and obey commands literally fractured people’s consciences, so that responsibility for the acts of violence always lay elsewhere. This, of course, ceases to be a cultural question but rather a fact of the human condition that has been replicated throughout the world, including in the United States, AVP’s country of origin. Nevertheless, the interviews suggest that one outcome of AVP is that those who experience it are beginning to piece their consciences back together and to take

profoundly personal responsibility for the future of their country.

D. Responding to Conflict

I have found a new way to resolve conflicts. Now I can look for the roots of conflict. Before, I just looked at the fruits. *Ruhitamo Jean Bosco, Gacaca Judge*

AVP teaches that conflict is inevitable. It is a part of living and a part of human interaction. Conflict is often uncomfortable and unpleasant, but it is not inherently bad, says AVP. It is how we respond to conflict that matters. The interviews were filled with examples of how AVP graduates are now trying to respond to everyday conflict creatively and courageously, rather than destructively. Some of these were nonviolent community conflicts, but the majority were testimonies of how AVP has helped to stem violence in the home. This section will discuss conflict in both arenas.

Community Conflict

People who have been elected by their communities to be Gacaca judges are called “people of integrity” and are often called upon to informally mediate conflicts as well. Most of the community-based conflicts interviewees talked about were cases in which they intervened as third parties.

AVP has helped me so much, and I use it. In my neighbor’s family, everyday the wife and husband used to fight. And everyday the man would come to tell me something, and the woman would come to tell me something. But because I hadn’t had the lesson about listening yet, I took sides. After AVP, I learned how I can listen to people. So I went and practiced, and I called them and I listened to them, and after that I brought them together. I can’t say things are completely resolved, but now they are together. Now I am happy because I did a good thing, because now they don’t fight every day like before.

Uwanziga Eugenie, Gacaca Judge

Much of the community conflict in Rwanda is over money, or is caused by the extreme lack of resources and poverty. Coupled with anxiety over money comes a humbling degree of personal generosity, and people will often loan or give a large percentage of their small



Akeyesu, Joyce

income to help friends and extended family. This generosity can, in turn, cause conflict, which can spur more generosity, which may cause more conflict. The quotes below are good examples of how many conflicts are resolved in Rwandan culture. The first example, however, may suggest that AVP has more work to do in helping people resist the desire to end conflict in the short term only to have it emerge later. AVP may need to consider incorporating more discussion of seeking durable solutions rather than instant alleviation of stress.

I met two people in a conflict over money. I started to talk to them to find out more. One had borrowed money from the other and hadn't paid it back. I found out that the one who borrowed the money had no money to pay. So I took my own money to pay one back and settled the conflict. *Birindabagabo Jean, Gacaca Judge*

Where I stay there is one boy who was selling drugs. I begged for him to stop selling, but he refused. But at the end of last year, when I finished AVP, I called him to sit together with me in my house. I asked him what the profit was that he got from selling drugs. He explained that that is how he earns something to live on. I asked him the benefits per month, and he told me he only got money for selling. But because I knew

that in me there is Transforming Power, [I looked for a solution]. I had a job where I get paid 30,000⁶ Francs per month. I chose to tell him, come and I'll give you my job. I paid him 10,000 Francs to work in my place. *Twilingimana Celestine, Demobilized Soldier*

Other interviewees talked about how they themselves were better equipped after AVP to handle stress and to understand the root causes of their own conflicts.

I was so upset because I lost my job as a teacher. I was worried about how we would survive. I always would talk badly at home and it would hurt my family. After AVP, I could see that doing that wouldn't resolve the problem. Before, because I was hurting, I didn't like to welcome people or talk to them, but now I welcome people and talk to them and feel better. *Hagama Francois Xavier, Gacaca Judge*

Violence in the Home

Anecdotal evidence suggests that there is a high rate of domestic violence in Rwanda of which both women and children are the victims. Domestic violence often spikes in times of war, and is a common aftereffect of trauma. Those who have experienced complete helplessness in the face of murder, displacement and poverty often seek to compensate by dominating others. In Rwanda, trauma reactions are still widely prevalent and may account for the high levels of intimate violence. One of the most striking consequences of AVP is the reported stemming of domestic violence. Many people openly admitted that they would beat their wives or children, but after AVP, that they had changed.

Before, I didn't listen to people. For example, at home, I didn't listen. I just beat [my children]. Now, I stop to find out what happened and why they are acting a certain way. *Kayitesi Daphalose, Gacaca Judge*

Before, I was a bad man. Even at home, I was having conflict. Now I am talking softly and they at home are wondering what happened to me. *Gacaca Judge – spontaneous testimony given in an AVP workshop*

When I reached home I would find that my wife had left things a mess. I told her I need food and that I'm hungry. And she tells you that there is no food. I used

to respond by yelling and beating her, and then she starts to abuse you saying you didn't give her the money for food. But now, when I reach home I say things nicely. Now I know I can't ask for food if I didn't give money for it. *Nkawika Jean Marie Vianne, Student*

In the twelve guidelines [for Transforming Power], there is one: to use humor and surprise. For example, my elder sister is a widow. She is a person who is angry all the time. One time I found her abusing the children. When I got there they were fighting. I thought of a story to help them laugh and forget everything. After the story, I asked them all what happened and I listened to the mother and the children. After I listened, I told them who was wrong. Many times, parents don't accept that they are wrong. In this case, the mom was wrong and I explained it to her. She accepted that she was wrong and asked the children for forgiveness. *Iryanyawera Thacienne, AVP Facilitator*

E. Criticism

In every interview, we posed several questions to elicit constructive criticism of the program, and tried to uncover concerns in a variety of ways. However, the most common response we got to those questions was: "There is nothing wrong with AVP." There were some concerns about the cultural appropriateness of some of the games, and we have already discussed those in an earlier section. The only other concerns were structural in nature. Some people wanted AVP to be longer, but just as many said that three days per workshop is a good length. Some people complained that the AVP program did not give enough monetary compensation for food and transport. Many other NGOs in Rwanda pay workshop participants a stipend, and so many people come expecting that additional benefit. While the AVP program does give money for transportation, it is a small amount compared to many other programs. On the other side, the Vice Mayor of Gisenyi said that this practice promoted a "bad attitude" among participants, and she was pleased to see that although AVP did not give as much money, people were still very positive and enthusiastic about the workshop. Another structural complaint that was raised by an AVP facilitator was that AVP should become its own entity rather than remain affiliated with

the Friends Peace House, and thereby the Friends Church. This critique is symptomatic of the tension the Friends Peace House has between remaining strongly connected to its roots and at the same time ensuring that AVP and its other programs are truly serving all people, regardless of religious affiliation. Although this one interviewee raised a concern, many others felt that AVP struck this balance well and that all participants both knew of AVP's origins and felt comfortable and accepted regardless of faith.

IV. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is clear from this evaluation that AVP is a highly valued and respected program in Rwanda. Many interviewees also talked enthusiastically about taking AVP to other countries in the region and elsewhere. This section, therefore, is divided into recommendations for the AVP program in Rwanda, and taking AVP to other countries.

AVP in Rwanda

1. AVP is now a strong enough program to greatly increase its reach. As we mentioned in the introduction, those interviewed for this evaluation issued a clear and urgent call for AVP to expand throughout Rwanda. Some people simply stated that AVP should reach "every person." Many others, however, recommended that AVP target specific groups, sectors and regions within the country. Below is a list that summarizes and compiles those ideas:

- Troubled Districts: AVP should concentrate on districts such as Kaduha, Nyaruguru and other areas where people are still killing one another.



Bucura David, AVP Coordinator

- Prisoners: Many judges recommended that AVP be conducted within the prisons to prepare those accused of perpetrating acts of genocide for the Gacaca process
- Mediators: Each district has mediators called “Abunzi” who mediate cases before they are brought to court. The Friends Peace House is already doing conflict resolution work with this group in Byumba and Kibuye. AVP can augment that ongoing work.
- Other Judges: Thus far, AVP has primarily trained sector level judges – many asked that all judges be trained by AVP.

⟨ Youth

⟨ Elders

⟨ Government Leaders

⟨ People Living with AIDS: Many family and community conflicts result from HIV/AIDS, and AVP can help communities seek ways to manage and transform those conflicts.

2. As the core group of AVP facilitators becomes more experienced and confident, it is clear that they are ready for ongoing capacity building. It would greatly augment the program to have regular gatherings of all AVP facilitators in Rwanda to evaluate their work and build their capacity in the following areas:

⟨ Cultural Relevancy of Activities: Facilitators should meet periodically to discuss whether certain activities are effective or not. For example, it is recommended that the use of “Adjective Names” be explored. It may be kept in AVP in Rwanda, but if it is, all facilitators must be clear about WHY it is being kept, and be better equipped to handle the resistance it sometimes generates.

⟨ How to Manage Resistance: In our observations of AVP workshops, and in some of the reports from other AVP facilitators, it seems that there would be a benefit to doing a training on resistance in workshops. This training would include examining the different types of

resistance, learning how resistance can be used to help rather than hinder a group to move deeper into the material, and recognizing how individual facilitators tend to feel in the face of resistance.

⟨ Evaluation of Facilitation Skills: Because AVP allows many people the opportunity to become facilitators, occasionally the AVP Coordinating Committee has had to stop people from continuing to facilitate because their behavior or message was not consistent with AVP philosophy. For example, those who teach alternatives to violence but then beat their wives have been dismissed from the facilitating team. Regular meetings can help to monitor such situations.

3. Although it would require much funding, it is recommended that the AVP-Rwanda program find a way to have a National AVP Day, in which it invites all people in Rwanda who have been trained in AVP to come together. The number would be well over 2000, and would allow people to connect across provinces and to realize that they were not only a part of a small workshop, but they are part of a national and global movement that is growing and gaining momentum.

4. The Vice Mayor of Gisenyi is a strong advocate for AVP. She has said that if Friends Peace House provides the facilitators and the materials, the Province of Gisenyi will provide for everything else: the meeting room, meals, and transportation for the participants. It is recommended that AVP begin to move toward this model, using Gisenyi as a pilot project and an example to share with other government officials. In this way, AVP can become more self-sustaining and less reliant on foreign donations to continue.

“ *These reactions suggest that AVP might be helpful in other countries, but even more importantly, it can be used as a tool to strengthen precarious regional relations, challenge existing stereotypes, and explore the roots and fruit of existing tensions between the countries of the Great Lakes.* ”

AVP in Other Countries

One of the goals of this evaluation was to assess the possibility of introducing AVP to other countries. We asked every interviewee what we should consider if we were to take AVP elsewhere, and what we could learn from the experience of working Rwanda. Without exception, people urged AVP to expand:

Peace cannot stay in small places. It is good when peace reaches everywhere, but when we don't understand things in the same way, it brings conflict. AVP can help people who have that conflict to be together. It is good for people from other countries to have AVP because peace is universal. *Ndagijimama Abdon, Gacaca Judge*

I lived [and was born] in Congo. In Congo, people don't know human rights, so they kill many people. Transforming power can help them. They can kill or beat each other because of misunderstandings. In Congo, they have tribalism. A person who speaks Kinyarwanda can die. The Congolese people are people who are very humble and they can change very quickly. *Kavoma Patric, Community Peacebuilder*

I know Congo and Burundi. I think to go there is good and it will help because they are countries that will fight all the time. Because they think Rwandans don't have good hearts. When they find that Rwandans can teach them good things, that can result in a good relationship between us. *Iryanyawera Thacienne, AVP Facilitator*

In principle, what happened in Rwanda may happen in neighboring countries. For example, what happened in Rwanda is now happening in Congo. Now in Congo, they say that people from Rwanda don't like them. Now, they don't like someone who speaks Kinyarwanda to stay in their country. If AVP goes there, and teaches them that a person is a person and has the right to live where they need to, it can help them. *Ruhanamirindi Gerard, Gacaca Judge*

It would be very good [to have AVP in other countries]. When your neighbors have peace, you have peace. AVP should go to the whole world because the most

important goal of AVP is to build peace in the world. *Haguma Francois Xavier, Gacaca Judge*

These reactions suggest that AVP might be helpful in other countries, but even more importantly, it can be used as a tool to strengthen precarious regional relations, challenge existing stereotypes, and explore the roots and fruit of existing tensions between the countries of the Great Lakes.

When bringing a program from outside, it is always important to first analyze its relevancy and potential impact in the new cultural and socio-political environment. The results of this evaluation are unambiguous: though AVP was imported from the United States, it is clear that it is flexible enough to have a lasting and meaningful impact in a very different society. This fact in itself is a strong commendation for taking the program to other countries and continents. When doing so, however, it is important to learn from the things AVP did well in Rwanda, and to improve in the areas in which it made mistakes.

It is important to take AVP to other countries. I support that 100%. It is important to think about the culture and the understanding. AVP is more westernized, it's more white. For people to see it more easily, it should match with the culture. One should look at issues like the adjective names and add more examples from that culture, and put them into the manual. The way it has been adapted to Rwanda is that we give relevant examples.... The curriculum has to be open to examples and changes. *Kalisa Eddy, AVP Facilitator*

This facilitator went on to say that when AVP was established in Rwanda, the original facilitators allowed room for participants to draw their own lessons from the activities, and that this was a strength of the program. It seems that the success of establishing AVP in other countries depends on flexibility, knowledge of the host culture and society, and a willingness to incorporate meaningful examples into the existing curriculum.

CONCLUSION

“Peace cannot stay in small places,” said Ndagijimama Abdon, an elder Gacaca judge in Gisenyi, “it is good when peace reaches everywhere.” Abdon’s message of hope and expectation is characteristic of what we found throughout this evaluation process. Each time, AVP started as a small three-day workshop and then rippled outward reaching small corners of each life in unexpected ways. As we continued and talked to more and more people, we began to feel that AVP was not just a series of workshops that stayed confined to small meeting rooms. In Rwanda, AVP is

beginning, instead, to feel like a movement: a movement of hope, of healing, of slow reconciliation, of possibility. “AVP is the way to help Rwandese people become a part of the same family, and to help them care for others and to come together to build Rwanda again,” said Akeyezu Alianne, a 25 year-old Gacaca judge.

“AVP was the best thing for me” said Mukarwihura Anne Marie looking at us intently. Her face softened, thinking of people she did not know. “I pray..for those who had the idea to bring AVP to Rwanda. It has brought such blessings to my life.”

FOOTNOTES

Page 5:

¹ Estimates of the numbers of deaths during the genocide range from between 800,000 to over one million.

² Pronounced “Ga-CHA-cha.” Literally means “on the grass.”

³ Niyongabo and Yeomans, 2003.

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⁴ Herman, Judith. Trauma and Recovery. Basic Books, HarperCollins Publishers, Inc. New York, 1992.

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⁵ This whole paragraph is excerpted from “I Still Believe there is Good in All People”, Adrien Niyongabo and Peter Yoemans, 2003.

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⁶ At the time of printing, 30,000 Frw was equivalent to approximately \$53.



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APPENDIX 1
AVP Workshops Conducted by AVP-Rwanda
June 2004 – March 2005

SUMMARY:

Total # of Workshops: **70**

Total Participants Trained: **Basic – 1,167** **Advanced – 152** **TOT – 28**

APPENDIX 2

List of Rwanda Interviewees.

Summary Profile of Interviewees:

Gender: 14 women and 23 men

Experience with AVP: 7 AVP Facilitators

27 AVP Participants (in Basic and Advanced)

3 government or Gacaca leaders who had not taken AVP

Age Range: 24 – 68 years old

Role in Gacaca: 4 Gacaca Coordinators (one in each region)

24 Gacaca Judges (includes 1 Alternate Judge)

Gikongoro

1. Mugabokwiye Jeanvier: Gacaca Secretary and Sector Coordinator¹, Nurse
2. Ruhitamo Jean Bosco: Gacaca Executive Secretary
3. Ruzindana Mark: Gacaca Vice President in Ngyiri, Electrician and Building Contractor.
4. Kavoma Patric: Peacebuilder, Peacebuilding, Healing and Reconciliation Program (PHARP)
5. Mukakabanda Juliette: Alternate Judge, Farmer
6. Mukarwihura Anne Marie: Gacaca President
7. Kayitesi Daphalose: Gacaca Judge
8. Birindabagabo Jean: Gacaca Vice President, Businessman
9. Mikuba Ndakubagana Dieu Donne: Gacaca President, Teacher

Byumba

10. Nyirabagande Laurance: Gacaca Judge, Farm Veterinarian
11. Akayezu Alianne: Gacaca Judge, Human Sciences
12. Rugandura Celeste: Gacaca Judge
13. Nyiramajyambere Françoise: AVP Facilitator, Church Secretary
14. Bihoyiki Joseph: AVP Facilitator, Businessman
15. Ndamage Emmanuel: Gacaca Coordinator for Byumba
16. Haguma François Xavier: Gacaca Secretary, former Teacher

Kigali

17. Kalisa Eddy: AVP Facilitator, Peace and Reconciliation Worker
18. Rubagumya Antoine *: Gacaca Coordinator for Kigali
19. Iryanyawera Thacienne: AVP Facilitator, Friends Peace House Staff
20. Akayesu Joyce: AVP Facilitator, Student
21. Twilingimana Celestine: Demobilized Soldier
22. Nkawika Jean Marie Vianne: Student
23. Bucura David: AVP-Rwanda Coordinator, Pastor

Gisenyi

24. Nyiranzeye Sada: Gacaca Secretary, Teacher
25. Mutabazi Jean Claude, Gacaca Vice President, Teacher
26. Rukamata Dismas*: Gacaca Judge, Headmaster of Secondary School
27. Rusigura Juma: Gacaca Secretary, Money Changer
28. Ndagijimama Abdon*: Gacaca Judge, Chemical Engineer
29. Twayigize Pierre: Gacaca Secretary, Farmer
30. Uzabakiriho Marieanne: Gacaca Judge, Farmer
31. Uwanziga Eugenie: Gacaca Secretary, Student
32. Ruhanamirindi Gerard: Gacaca President
33. Mapendo Adette: Gacaca Secretary, Teacher
34. Musabeyezu Charlotte: Vice Mayor, Gisenyi
35. Twagiramariya Agnes: Gacaca Vice President, sells small things
36. Mukandutiye Agnes: Gacaca Secretary, Farmer
37. Bukuru Rubens: Gacaca Coordinator for Gisenyi

(Footnotes)

¹ Those who are Gacaca Secretaries, Presidents, Vice Presidents and Coordinators are also Gacaca Judges. These titles describe their particular roles within the tribunal of judges, either at the cell or sector level.

* Those names with an “*” are interviewees who have never attended AVP.

APPENDIX 3 Interview Questions

- 1) What do you remember most about your AVP workshop?
- 2) Did anything change in your life because of the AVP workshop? Can you tell us a story of how you were before and after your first AVP workshop?
- 3) How have you or will you apply the lessons you learned to Gacaca?
- 4) Do you think AVP can help Gacaca? If so, how? If not, why not?
- 5) What was the most important thing you learned from AVP and how have you used it?
- 6) What is Transforming Power? Has it been useful to you? How?
- 7) What was not good about AVP?
- 8) If you could change anything at all about AVP, what would it be?
- 9) How can AVP contribute to peace, forgiveness and reconciliation/
- 10) How is AVP similar or different to Rwandan culture? Is there anything in AVP that is bad for Rwandan culture?
- 11) If we were thinking about doing AVP in another country, what are some things we should think about?
- 12) What do you think about taking AVP to another country?



The Friends Peace House's vision is a unified Rwandan society that has a vibrant culture of peace, which respects human rights, and which improves the living standards of all its members. Its three general goals are: 1) to build a sustainable and durable peace in Rwanda; 2) to restore the relationships that were destroyed by the war and genocide to ensure peaceful co-existence; and 3) to reintegrate the people who were harmed by the tragic events of this country. The Friends Peace House works with all sectors of Rwandan society and in all provinces of Rwanda, regardless of religious affiliation, gender, or ethnic group, focusing particularly on women,

widows, children and youth, genocide survivors, prisoners, community and religious leaders, and grassroots and religious associations.

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The Africa Great Lakes Initiative strengthens, supports and promotes peace activities at the grassroots level in the Great Lakes region of Africa. To this end, AGLI responds to requests from local religious and non-governmental organizations that focus on conflict management, peace building, trauma healing, and reconciliation. AGLI is an initiative created by the Friends Peace Teams, an organization consisting of sixteen Quaker Yearly Meetings in the United States who have united to support the traditional emphasis of Quakers in promoting a more peaceful world. Since its inception in 1999, AGLI has worked with the people of the Great Lakes region on a wide variety of projects, ranging from international volunteer efforts, to the creation of AVP programs in Kenya, Burundi and Rwanda, to the introduction of community

trauma healing work in Burundi, Rwanda, and Uganda. AGLI has also sponsored work camps in Uganda, Burundi, Rwanda and Kenya, established school scholarship funds, and sent long-term volunteers and consultants to work with local partner organizations.

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