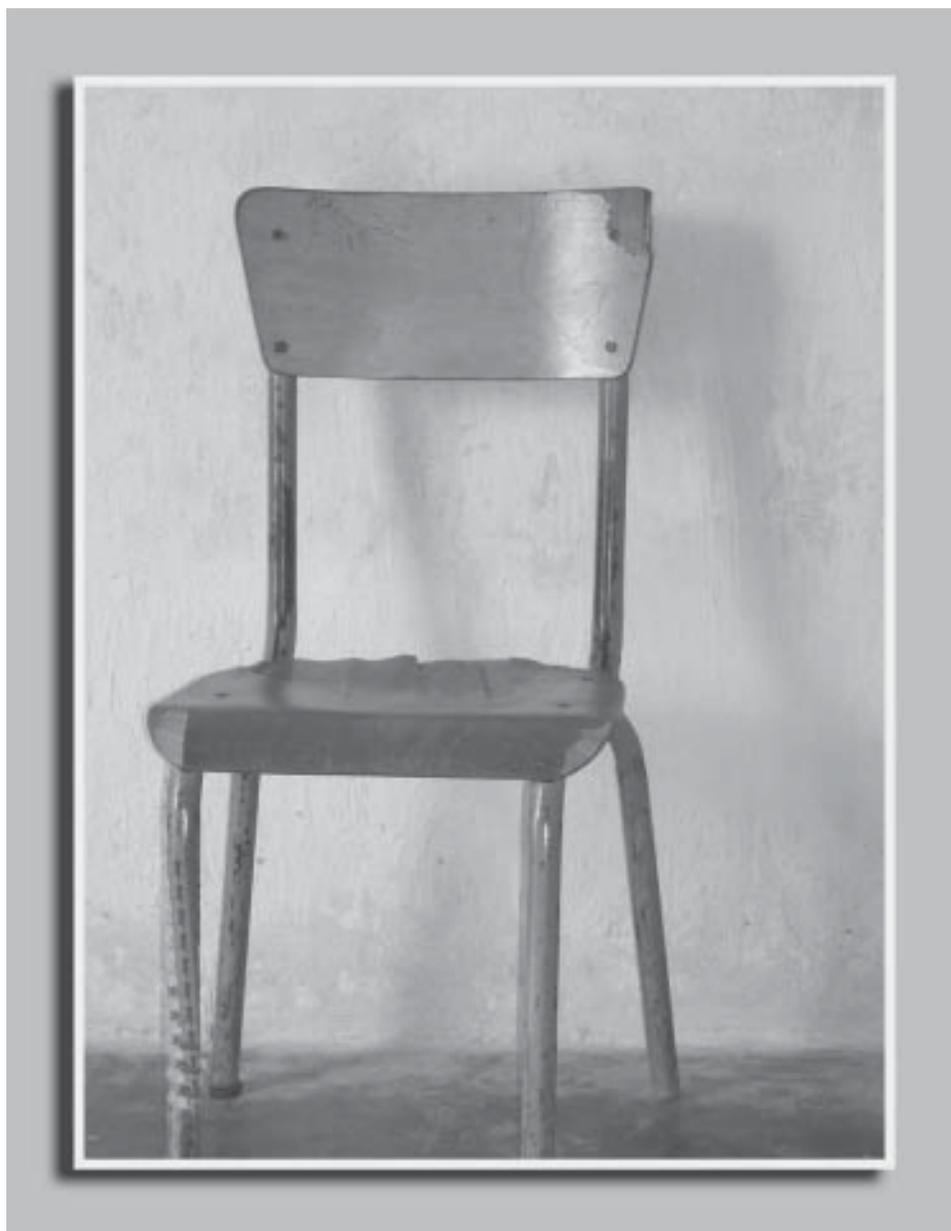


# After the Guns Have Stopped:

## Searching for Reconciliation in Burundi

*By Theoneste Bizimana and Anna Sandidge*



A report from  
the African Great Lakes Initiative  
of the Friends Peace Teams

## **Acknowledgements**

We would like to extend our gratitude to all who took the time to be with us and to share their amazing stories. Special thanks to Adrien Niyongabo for making special arrangements for this work in Burundi, and to Elie Nahimana and the Burundi Yearly Meeting. Special thanks also to all the facilitators and to those who made local arrangements. We are grateful to Dawn Rubbert for her diligent and thoughtful editing and to Laura Shipler Chico for her insightful comments and corrections. Thanks to you, the readers of this report, and, to all who have made this report possible.

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# PREFACE

Here is an opportunity. An opportunity to hear the lives of eighteen individuals and their response to the violence that has affected them in remote, rural areas of Burundi. An opportunity not to hear the cries of those in the midst of conflict, but the mature thoughts of people who, more than a decade after the violence began, are healing. An opportunity to hear from very disparate people—younger, older; men, women; Hutu, Tutsi; brave and “just like most of us;” educated and illiterate. An opportunity to listen to unheard voices of Africans indicating how the peaceable community may be restored. An opportunity to hear what they have to say to those of us in the international community. An opportunity to contemplate what their experiences and healing say to our own condition at a time of domestic and international violence. What happens after the guns have stopped?

When I visited Burundi in October 2005, Adrien Niyongabo, the Coordinator of the Healing and Rebuilding Our Community (HROC) program, and I met with Mamethe Sibomana and I was overwhelmed by the stories she told us. Listening to Mamethe I realized that there were probably many stories that needed to be told and heard. I was fortunate to discover that Anna Sandidge, who had spent July to September in Burundi with our workcamp and then afterwards with our other programs, was willing to go back and interview average Burundians living in the areas where HROC workshops had been conducted. Theoneste Bizimana, the HROC coordinator in Rwanda, was able to come to Burundi to partner with Anna and interview forty-one people with Anna. Theoneste speaks Kinyawandan (the language of Rwanda) which is very similar to Kirundi (the language of Burundi) and he previously spent a month studying peacemaking in Burundi. While I had high expectations that this interviewing process would be successful, the report exceeds even my high expectations.

As one listens to these stories, one realizes that the situation in Burundi is complex. There is not a good side and a bad side/good people and bad people, not even a Tutsi side and a Hutu side. Life is more complicated than our poor powers to add or detract.

The essence of “finding that of God in other people” is to try to empathize with them—to try to put yourself in their shoes (although I suspect that many who were interviewed do not have shoes, perhaps only flip-flops or bare feet). As you read, try to imagine what you would have done if you had to live the life-stories described in this report. How would you have survived, not only physically, but emotionally and psychologically?

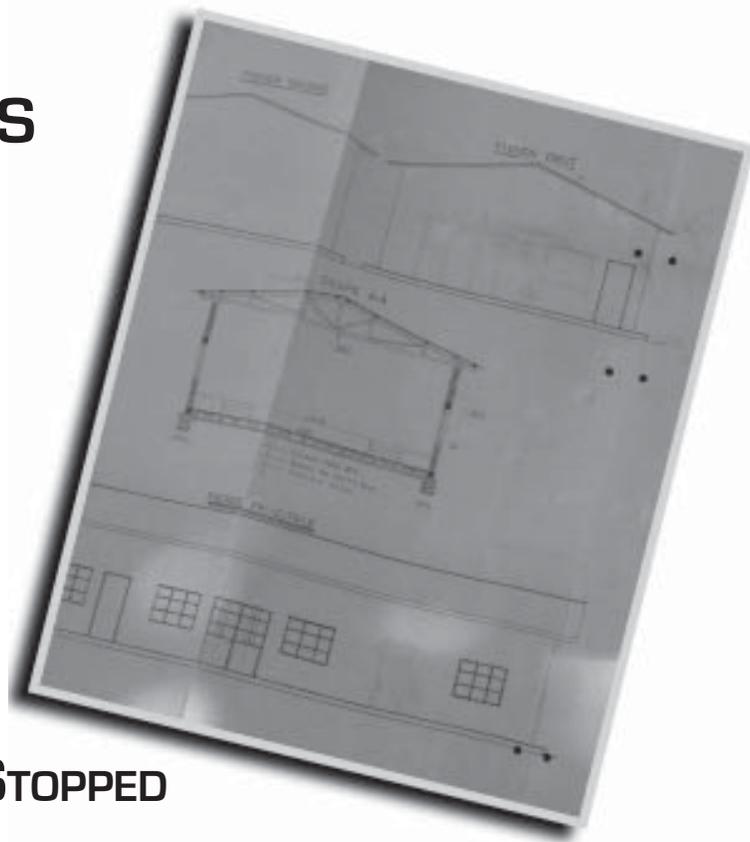
The interviews are followed by an evaluation conducted by Peter Yeomans on the effectiveness of the Healing and Rebuilding Our Community workshops. We have placed the table of traumatic events revealed in the study on the back cover. There are nineteen of them. In my whole life, I have never experienced or witnessed even one of these events. Some I can’t even imagine—“Forced to hide among the dead” or “forced to harm or kill a family member or friend.” Participants in the HROC workshops each experienced an average of 9 ½ of these traumatic events..

I recommend that you read this report carefully, listening well to the lessons of the stories and the wisdom of those who are healing from traumatic events.

David Zarembka



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# INTRODUCTION

**HOW DO WE STAND FOR THE VOICES OF THOUSANDS OF SURVIVORS WHO LONG FOR A BETTER WAY? HOW DO WE TELL THEIR STORIES OF HORROR, HEALING AND HOPE? HOW DO WE HONOR THEIR COURAGE WITHOUT EXPLOITING THEIR SUFFERING? AND THEN WHERE DO THE STORIES BEGIN? IS IT 1993 WHEN THE CRISIS BEGAN OR IS IT BEFORE THAT, WHEN INDEPENDENCE WAS GAINED FROM COLONIAL POWERS? WAS IT WHEN THEY WERE COLONIZED? OR, DO THE STORIES BEGIN AFTER THE GUNS HAVE STOPPED?**

For three weeks we met in shadowed rooms of churches, community centers and meeting halls gathering stories, collecting snapshots of tragedy and trauma. Together we stepped cautiously into the Light, seeking healing and hope. We met cultivators, pastors, teachers, healers, artists, sisters, fathers, brothers, and mothers. We met community leaders, political activists, refugees, former soldiers and policemen. We met peacemakers, Pentecostals, Friends, Catholics; we met Tutsi, Hutu, Twa. These are their stories, their words, their dreams, and their discoveries. With their lessons for us to learn and grow from, they are here to join the world community. In return, they ask us for prayers of support, to understand the pain and poverty of war, to share their stories with others and to stand with them, never forgetting to practice peace.

The genocide in Rwanda and the Crisis (as the Burundians call it) in Burundi did not just happen in April 1994 and October 1993. The current violent conflict began in 1959, three years before independence, with the encouragement of the Belgian colonial power. Politicians used the ethnic divide as a method to consolidate power and to control the entire population. When a government began to lose power and support, a new round of violence

would occur to keep the ruling ethnic group in power—in Burundi this was the Tutsi while in Rwanda it was the Hutu (Niyongabo, Zarembka, 2004).

As the years passed Burundi has experienced waves of violence and a series of bloody political coups. Each year brought uncertainty as new political movements surged for power and grasped for it by violent means. The Crisis of October 1993 was another round in the seemingly endless cycle of violence. But in 1993 political conflict fueled mass murders of school children in Kibimba and sparked revenge killings that perpetuated a mass movement of neighbor killing neighbor. Systematically, community and family were destroyed.

A recent study conducted by Peter Yeomans examines the frequency of traumatic events experienced by Burundians beginning in 1993 during the Crisis and the impact of HROC on Posttraumatic Stress Disorder symptoms (2005), (see summary of the report on page ). One hundred percent of those he interviewed had experienced an active combat situation, 78.2 percent reported narrowly escaping death, and 91 percent had lost personal property through banditry or fire. 11.5 percent reported being raped while over 20 percent

of the participants reported having had to witness a rape. All of those interviewed were forced to hide at one point in the forest to escape fighting or death and of those, 12.8 percent were forced to hide among the dead. Over 16 percent were forced to harm or kill a stranger while over 11 percent were forced to harm or kill a family member (Yeomans, 2005).

Given such widespread exposure to and participation in the violence that worked to destroy any semblance of family and community how do we work to bring people back together? What can rebuild the trust? Healing and Rebuilding Our Community (HROC) works through encounter workshops to rebuild the lives, families and communities that have been destroyed. Each three-day HROC (pronounced "He-rock") workshop brings ten Hutu and ten Tutsi participants from Burundi together, usually for the first time in years.

The first day of each workshop is intentionally structured to develop a secure environment where everyone can feel free to talk. This environment is created through a series of group exercises that begin to build trust. There is an introduction to psycho-social trauma (a new concept to most of the participants), a presentation on the causes and symptoms of trauma, followed by small-group discussions on the effects of trauma on the participants, and, a closing relaxation exercise. On the second day, participants learn a variety of listening skills, and talk about grief and loss, how to recover from trauma, and destructive and constructive ways of dealing with anger. The third day brings introductions a "tree of

mistrust" and a "tree of trust," which leads to a "trust walk" where each Hutu participant is blindfolded and led around by a Tutsi participant, and then vice versa. Each workshop ends with individual testimonials and evaluation (Niyongabo, Zarembka, 2004).

In order to discover how HROC helps communities heal we began with a simple question: how is the Healing and Rebuilding Our Communities (HROC) program impacting communities in Burundi? We soon discovered there are no simple answers. With a series of carefully worded questions in hand, tidy paper forms to be completed and the mindset of researchers ready to begin, we sat with our first interviewee eager for the answer. We were not prepared for the quiet eloquence of the natural storyteller, the conviction of someone who has witnessed a powerful transformation nor the deep insight that only reflection and persistent questioning can bring. We came with the intention to report on a program's impact but we left with the simple gifts of love, forgiveness and wisdom. It is these gifts we bring to you.

Let us acquaint you with those who have shared their courage, pain and hope with us. We are grateful to them for their willingness and their candor. All have agreed to share their names, stories and photographs with you. We regret that in these pages we cannot share all 41 stories or the endless stories that we have yet to gather. We have chosen to share complete narratives instead of composites of multiple characters. These are their stories as told to us; these are their words.

**“ Let us acquaint you with those who have shared their courage, pain and hope with us. We are grateful to them for their willingness and their candor. ”**



## CIZA CONSILE

When facilitators were making arrangements for us to interview community members, Consile agreed to speak with us even though she had not yet attended a HROC workshop. Like so many of her fellow Burundians, Consile's is a story of the horror of war which illustrates why the workshops are so necessary for those who have endured traumatic experiences. After meeting Consile we were honored to have been given the offering of her presence and her story. She walked over three hours one way to speak with us.

Consile is 45 years old. She lives near Cagura, alone. Six of her eight children are living; one was killed during the war and another has died since from malaria. Her oldest is 24 years old and her youngest is 11. Consile told us that her children have chosen to live on the streets, begging, as opposed to remaining home with her. She bowed her head and told us she felt much shame that her children would leave her. Her husband was killed during the war and she is unable to raise enough food

for herself. During the war she was forced to flee into the bush many times with her children, hoping to avoid more attacks.

*First, when the war began, I went to my mother's home. It was difficult to return to her home because there were many people who were angry and killing others. I spent three days in the forest so I decided to go home to my husband. Later, I heard that the people (Tutsis) from the Internally Displaced Persons camp, came and killed my mother and then they burned her body. I loved her very much.*

*When I returned back home during the war, people from the camp (Tutsis) took my husband and my oldest son and began to beat them before my very eyes. When they carried them away in the crowd I did not know if they still lived. After two days, I heard that they had been killed. It was very difficult for me to realize their death. I couldn't understand why they had been killed. Some people had*

*said they were first taken to Ngozi, to the prison. So I tried to take food to them. But before I could go, someone came to me and said, "don't go, they are dead." This was in 1995. That was the second horrible thing that happened to me.*

*After that, I went to stay with my mother-in-law. We were trying to find food for my children. Then more people from the camps came and they killed her before my eyes. I escaped but I lost four people in one year. The people came after me and wanted to kill me, others came wanting to replace my husband.*

*One day I was alone at home and a big man from the camp came. He beat me and he raped me. It was very bad. He told me, "If you tell anyone I will kill you." From that day I have told no one what happened to me. You are the first people I have told of the rape. From that day, I asked myself, "Why has this happened to me?" I don't understand why this happened. Sometimes I think I should see a doctor. I don't want to go to a clinic because I am afraid people will talk and shame me. I am afraid though that I am very sick, maybe AIDS. The rape was ten years ago and I am not well.*

Consile told us repeatedly that she was ashamed of being raped. We sat with her assuring her that she did nothing wrong and that it took much strength for her to survive and continue to live. She told us she has suffered severe health problems since the rape and has been unable to receive good medical treatment. "I have told no one of the rape until today. But when I visited the nurse for physical problems I am having – I bleed a lot - she tells me I should get a husband and that

would fix my problems. Since the rape I do not want another husband." There are no individual counseling services and very few medical services available to Consile in her rural village.

*After the rape, I fled into the bush. I was afraid to be at home. Until the rape, my children were with me and I tried to take care of them. My oldest was in the ninth grade but he got sick and could not continue. I hoped after finishing his studies he would be able to help me and his brothers and sisters. But he got sick and now he cannot see; he is blind. I have no money to help him.*

*After returning from the bush, I discovered my home was destroyed. I try to rebuild it myself but as a woman it is very difficult. Because of the poverty I have no food and no money to rebuild. I am tired and have much stress. My children have left me to become street children. They say they prefer the streets to living with me. I am sad because I know my neighbors laugh at me.*

As she retold her life events she was soft-spoken, her head bowed seemingly embarrassed, but she never faltered in the telling, and never cried. When Consile finished sharing her story we sat holding hands in silence. We mourned with her all the loss she has experienced and in the end it felt like it was not enough. Yet she thanked us with deep sincerity for the opportunity to speak with us, to share her story with others. We told Consile that with her permission we would like to share her story with friends in America and Europe. We asked her if there was a special message that she would like us to pass on to you. Here is what she said:

***Our country has experienced many bad things. And now we don't hear the guns, but we have no trust. It is difficult to live in peace with someone who killed your husband, who raped you. Today we face poverty and all of the consequences of war. Pray for us so that our country may become a good country again. Remember us. Continue to help us and be near us, care about us.***

***I tell you my stories for the first time. I have not told the truth to my neighbors or anyone as it is because I do not trust them. We need people to be near us who we can trust to share our experiences so we can heal as a country. Please continue to pray for me. I don't want another husband. I want to live in peace and I want my children home.***

# COMING HOME

## ANNA SANDIDGE

I sat in the small guest house in the center of Bujumbura, the capital of Burundi waiting for my visa to be approved before I could head back up-country to Kibimba where I had been living and working for the past month. The power was out again and the main room was washed in candle-light. A man entered and politely asked to join me. We exchanged pleasantries and he sat across the table from me, his English impeccable. I was relieved at the hope of not having to stumble through my awkward French.

He was a small man, near five foot five, approaching his mid fifties. His face was not creased with age but with the burdens and memories of a life no one should have to imagine. His wire-rimmed spectacles sat pinched low on his nose and his curly graying hair rose in powdery tufts around his crown. Gentleness poured from him yet his shoulders were noticeably stooped from a burden long carried.

Samuel was a teacher at the secondary school in Kibimba before the crisis. In 1993, 79 young Tutsi students were taken to a local gas station by Hutu rebels. The young children were locked inside and burned to death – the infamous holocaust of Kibimba. In 1993, after the killings of the students, the soldiers came to kill him, his wife and his children. They all fled into the bush; their house was destroyed



and soldiers were systematically hunting for Samuel and his family. He paused in his telling and took a deep breath. And so his flight began. His family chose to seek shelter with other family members and begged Samuel to seek safety in Nairobi, Kenya. He told me he was arrested repeatedly during his exodus but somehow, God freed him each time.

Once during his flight Samuel was arrested by soldiers on the road, marched at gun-point, and ordered to dig a mass grave where he and other prisoners were forced to bury over 100 bodies of women and children who had been lying there for over two weeks. "At one point a soldier gleefully shot a mother through her breast to kill the baby at her back. She had been lying there for two weeks and was

**“ The tears never fell as he talked; they remained restrained, held back by pride, shame, and sadness so deep I will never be able to understand its depths. He repeatedly thanked God for sparing him and in the same breath exclaimed he should be dead. ”**

not yet dead but he killed her and the baby.”

The tears never fell as he talked; they remained restrained, held back by pride, shame, and sadness so deep I will never be able to understand its depths. He repeatedly thanked God for sparing him and in the same breath exclaimed he should be dead. But through the kindness of strangers, a soldier turning his head in time for Samuel to flee down the road to Bujumbura, another stranger helped him make it on one of the last buses to Nairobi where he finally arrived to find a small taste of freedom, Samuel is saved. In Nairobi, he lived for the next two years wondering if his wife and children had lived. Miraculously they survived. In the following two years they made it to Nairobi where they have been living for the past ten years.

Samuel tells me has returned home; he wants to rebuild his life in Burundi. Weeks later we meet on a dusty road in Kibimba as he surveys the remains of his family home. He saw me, smiled, and greeted me with a hug and a blessing. Turning back to his home he said, “It is time to come home.” He grasped my

hand and unashamedly, this time, the tears fell and together we stood in silence, hands clasped, looking at his home.

My work that trip took me away from Kibimba, back to Bujumbura and later on an excursion to Rwanda. In mid August, when I was at the Rwanda-Burundi border waiting for permission to cross back into Burundi I was speaking with a Rwandan physician. As our conversation turned to security threats and recent rebel attacks, I spied a familiar face out of the corner of my eye. I begged my companion to forgive me as I went to meet Samuel.

We greeted one another warmly and marveled at God’s timing of placing us at the border crossing at the same time. After having traveled on little money and a lot of faith Samuel had seen his old home-place, visited family long missed and was returning to Nairobi where his wife and children lived. He was leaving Burundi, returning to Nairobi to bring his family home. “My heart is ready for peace, ready to forgive,” he said. “I want to come home.”



## NAHINKUYE NESTOR

Nestor is 45 and lives in the community around Kibimba. He and his family fled to Tanzania in 1996 during the second major outbreak of violence. The father of five children, his oldest is thirteen and his youngest is three years, he has worked as a subsistence farmer or cultivator all his life. On the 7<sup>th</sup> of September, 2005 he had just returned from living in a refugee camp in Tanzania with his wife and children.

*Before the war, and before we left for Tanzania, I saw my relatives being killed. So I decided to flee to Tanzania. I had two very small children. I carried one on my back and my wife carried our other child on her back. The*

**“ I come home to find the house of my father destroyed. I want to go back to Tanzania; I don't feel safe here. But then Tanzania is not safe either. I want to feel safe. ”**

*trip took us two weeks walking. We walked mostly at night and hid in the bush during the day to sleep, hiding from soldiers who wanted to kill us.*

*When we reached Tanzania I had much sadness and saw bad things. There was a camp for us but it was like a prison. When we tried to leave to find food or work we were beaten by Tanzanian policemen. When I saw these things I knew it would be very difficult for us to stay. I wanted my family to leave but then if you go you find home is no longer safe either. At the camps there were many guns and there were thieves who could come and kill you in the night. We run from guns of home only to find more guns.*

*When we finally decided the camps were too dangerous we registered with UNHCR (United Nations High Commission for Refugees) to come home to Burundi. It took us two years before they would release us to go home. Now that we are finally back in Burundi it is difficult. We live with my mother-in-law. My proper house has been destroyed. I feel like I am living in the middle.*



Nestor had not attended the HROC workshop but had heard about it from community members. “I have not seen changes in my community but then I have been home for a very short time. I have experienced many bad things. I come home to find the house of my father destroyed. I want to go back to Tanzania; I don't feel safe here. But then Tanzania is not safe either. I want to feel safe.”

Nestor, sits silently for a moment his head bowed, hands clasped tightly in his lap. He raise his eyes and looks questioningly at us. “This HROC sounds like a good thing. I would very much like to attend, meet other people who have experienced bad things. I think it could help.” We smiled encouragingly and assured him we would try to make arrangements for him to attend the next available workshop, and, as we wrapped up the interview, parting with thanks and handshakes he turned at the door and asked, “Is it possible”, he paused, shook his head and continued, “is it possible to heal, to have hope again with this HROC?” Theoneste, follows him out the door and with heads bent together Theo shares his own stories of hope.

### **BIZIMANA THEONESTE**

My name is Theoneste BIZIMANA. I was born in 1981 in the western province. I am not yet married but if God blesses me I can do that in 2008. In our family I am the second child in two. My father died when my brother and I were two young babies. I don't even know his image, which makes me sometimes feel badly! After the death of my father, as she was still young, my mammy decided to leave us and find another husband. She took me to her parents and my brother stayed with our father's mother. I was 6 months old and my brother was one and a half.

By the will of God we grew from there separately. When I was 8 years old I was forced to return back to my father's family. That is our culture: a child is for his father's family. I stayed with my grandmother. She helped with my primary studies, and for my secondary studies I found another person to help me because she was not able. In 2002 I had finished the secondary school. Today I am at University and this is my third year. I am studying sociology. Since 2003 I have been working with HROC Rwanda and I like this work because it has helped in my healing from trauma.

Before attending the HROC workshop I was too sad. I could not trust any person because I had heard that my father died of poison and from that time I hated people. When I remembered my difficult childhood, I felt angry! I was asking myself how I could just find the person who killed my father or his relatives for revenge! I had many bad thoughts and no person could know that! But after attending the workshop, it was like the key of healing and hope to me!! During the workshop we shared our histories and for me it was hard just to open up and talk! I remember one day we were in the gathering

time and Adrien Niyongabo was the facilitator. He asked us to share a good thing we remember that our mother had done for us. I remembered that we had been separated from her when I was a very young baby!! I started to cry and after 10 minutes I spoke out. From that day I felt rested and happy. By hearing others' stories I saw that others suffered more than me, and I felt my pain decrease!

After that, I decided to become a facilitator to help others during the workshops and even after. I listen to them. In order to help myself, I find another person like Laura Shipler Chico and others to listen to me. And Anna has been an important person to me during the work in Burundi too. In 2004 I also became an AVP facilitator. Now I am the coordinator of HROC in Rwanda.

Through HROC I see some changes in the community. For example you can see a survivor of genocide and a released prisoner as close friends, after just attending the workshop but before, they couldn't even greet one another. Because of that I wish to see HROC moving wherever in the world it can help. Especially in our Great Lakes region, I see it can help in peace and in our healing process.

**“By hearing others' stories I saw that others suffered... I felt my pain decrease!”**



### UKWIGIZE ANOTOLIE

Anotolie is a 60 year old woman living in the Mutaho Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) camp. She has been living in the camp for over ten years now with her nine children. Her youngest is 15 years old and her oldest is 40 and lives with his children in the camp as well. Anotolie is a cultivator. She told us it was very difficult to feed her family during the war because her plot was so far from the camp and many community members would harvest her food before she could tend to it.

Anotolie has attended the HROC workshop in Mutaho.

*The life we have is difficult. Where we cultivate, it takes two and half hours walk to reach our plots; the harvest is not enough to feed our children. Sometimes I leave the house at 6:30 in the morning and work until 2:00 in the afternoon and don't make it home until early evening. I am tired but there is still more work to do at home.*

*During the war certain people came to my home and took my husband to the river. They cut him in two bodies with machetes - Hutu rebels. The children left home and fled to the IDP camp. My brother was a priest so I decided to stay with him. Later my brother was shot by Hutu rebels and I was forced to flee to the camp as well.*

We asked Anotolie to share with us her experiences and feelings of HROC and how she is able to use what she has learned in the workshop in her life at the camp and in coping with witnessing the death of her husband and brother.

*As the war began I became a Christian. A few days later they (Hutu rebels) took my husband and killed him. I asked God why this happened. I got no answer but I asked God to protect my children and he did. The relatives of those who killed my husband came and protected me. And even though I lost my husband, the hand of God protected me and*

*my children. Since my childhood, I have never seen a person killed until that day.*

*I was very happy to receive an invitation to attend the workshop. I remember the trees of mistrust and trust from our lessons. I have found the tree of mistrust only gives bad fruits. But the tree of trust gives good fruits. The bad tree symbolizes the bad that people do and you have to find them and help them plant the good tree in their hearts. I realize the teachings are powerful. The people who learn this are wise because it is the healing of a traumatized people.*

*It's hard to build the full trust. We see people in the community now and they give us water but still our harvests are sometimes stolen. There are thieves so there is still a deep lack of trust. It is difficult because we live so far from our plots. If we ask someone to guard our plots they ask for all of our food – see there is not enough trust.*

*Just after I returned from the workshop I returned to the camp. I tried to talk to people at the camp, to get my relatives to forgive those who have hurt us. I always talk of reconciliation to people. I tell them that separation does not come from God. In the workshop, we were from different ethnic groups. I appreciate the way the facilitators mixed the groups. You have a person from the camp sitting with a community member and now when we pass on the road we meet and greet one another.*

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**Some of us went to Gitega prison to visit people who killed our families. We collected money and things [for the prisoners]. We gathered food to share. There was singing and dancing, it was good. But some people are not ready for that. The people at the prison appreciated our meeting them and many have been released to the communities. I see there is a good tree and a bad tree in us. For some they are so broken they can only grow a bad tree. They need this training.**

*If it is possible, we need these teachings in the whole community. There are people who are broken, lost and truly traumatized. Some people see the people who killed their relatives, this is very hard. Those who killed cannot trust enough to ask for forgiveness, just as those who have attended HROC now have the spirit to forgive.*

*Some of us went to Gitega prison to visit people who killed our families. We collected money and things [for the prisoners]. We gathered food to share. There was singing and dancing, it was good. But some people are not ready for that. The people at the prison appreciated our meeting them and many have been released to the communities. I see there is a good tree and a bad tree in us. For some they are so broken they can only grow a bad tree. They need this training.*

*People in the camps, they hear the government wants to close the camps. We know it is too soon to return to the community. There are too many people who cannot trust. I think HROC can help them trust so we can go home.*

Anotolie spoke of a desire to have one community with no distinctions between people who lived in the community and those who lived in the camps. She told us that while she sees progress, people willing to speak to others and a coming together of HROC participants in the Mutaho area, there is still a lot of work to do. She emphasized many times that she felt when more people learned about trust, trauma, and healing then the divided communities could become one.

## SINZOTUMA CHRISTOPHE

Christophe is 46 years old, the father of seven children. His oldest is 26 and his youngest died at 6 from malaria in the refugee camp in Tanzania where he and his family lived for over eight years. They have been in Mutaho for the last six months where he is supporting his family as a cultivator. Before the war Christophe worked as a building contractor. He has been unable to find work since his return. He had never attended HROC but was interested in attending the next available workshop in his community.

*I remember '93 when the president was killed and the war began. People began to kill each other. We were hiding in the forest for three years. It was difficult; my father was killed. Burundi was no longer a country for my family to live in. So we went to Tanzania to live. I got sick in the camp and my youngest boy died in the camps. We had no food and no medicine. I heard in 2005 that the peace had started again in Burundi, so we came home. We have been here for nine months.*

Christophe asked us many questions about HROC and the purpose of the workshops. Theoneste explained the purpose and process of each workshop.

*I think this can help. We are living together in community. Some people left our homes to go to the camps. If HROC brings people together and helps them move home then that can rebuild the trust. If the people stay in the camps we won't have a sustainable peace. I think it better for them to show unity that will build a peace.*

We asked Christophe if there was a specific



message to people in Europe and America that he would like us to pass along. Here is his response:

*First of all I thank God because he protected me and truly we as people from the community are beginning to live together. We see division comes from high authorities. If they don't divide us we can live in community with no problems. I was afraid when I saw my father killed, so I fled. I didn't do anything wrong I was just afraid.*

*I hope with our new president we will come together. Our country has experienced many bad things but I believe with God we can live without guns and killing. Through your prayers remember us in our poverty and illness. After the war God can help bring us peace, bring us development. Remember us in your prayers.*

**“ We as people from the community are beginning to live together. We see division comes from high authorities. If they don't divide us, we can live in community with no problems. ”**

## MPAWENAYO DENNIS

Dennis is 25 years old. He is married with two children, a 3 year old and a 3 month old, both girls. He and his wife met and married in the refugee camp in Tanzania. They have adopted Dennis' 16 year old nephew who was orphaned by the war. No other family members were able to take him in. Dennis has lived in refugee camps twice, first in 1996. In 2000, he went home only to find heavy fighting and retreated again to Tanzania. Dennis returned to Burundi in 2003 with his wife. He works as a cultivator but would like to find other work. Dennis has participated in the HROC workshop in Ruyigi.

*I remember when the war began this was the province of rebel fighters. This area was very dangerous. After going to Tanzania we found life very difficult. When we returned the first time we heard things were safer but then it became more dangerous than before when we fled. We heard bigger guns, more bombs and more fighting. So we fled back to Tanzania and remained until the peace agreement had begun.*

*Life in a camp is difficult. You are not free. They have sharp wired fences so you cannot leave. They don't give you enough food. You cannot find clothes. You eat one meal a day. Sometimes the food they would give us would be bad and it would make us very sick. Even though we were not allowed to leave the camp sometimes we could sneak out into the forest to try to find food for our families.*

We asked Dennis to share with us his experiences and impressions of the HROC workshop he had attended in March of 2005. We also asked him if HROC had been helpful to him or anyone in the community. We inquired how HROC was similar to Burundian culture and how that helped him practice what he had learned in the workshops. He smiled at us, shifted in his seat and didn't pause to take a breath.

*When I got the invitation to attend I didn't understand what I was going to attend. But afterward when I got there I was really happy because I understood that I had experienced much trauma. I have experienced bad things. As a young boy I was preparing to get married but my house was burned and I saw many people dying and being killed.*

*But in HROC we began talking about the causes of trauma. I saw I had symptoms from the trauma I had seen and experienced. Seeing the causes of trauma in the workshop I saw many of my symptoms were the same as those caused by trauma. Now that I know my symptoms I also try to help others see them in their selves. To help a person who has been traumatized, we must show them the love because they have lost their identity and other people may see him or her as mad or crazy. But if you show them love then they can share the bad things they have experienced with you. You share in that, you just listen to him and maybe you can tell him how even though bad things happen there is hope to heal.*



***Before attending I just lived with others. It was hard and if someone did something to make me angry or upset I would fight with them. But after discovering the reasons for my anger I discovered how to deal with my behavior. I know the reasons for my anger and I can do things differently.***

***In Burundi culture, when someone has a problem you help him physically. If you have some food you share, if you have extra clothes you give them to someone. But it is difficult to help people who are suffering from the consequences of war who need more than physical things. Sharing the love and being a listener is helpful and difficult but then that doesn't meet all their needs. They are still hungry and isn't that trauma? Sometimes it is difficult to heal from the consequences of war when your trauma from the war continues in your daily life. The ears which are hungry cannot hear.***

*What is my vision for HROC? In this province we have been greatly affected by the war. I wish to have HROC teachings in all the villages and in the countryside. There are some who still have the spirit of revenge because they don't know the causes of their anger and hate. HROC can help them see their hidden self.*

*My message to the USA and to Europe: First,*

*me, I personally thank you for supporting HROC. Through HROC I have discovered myself and have decided to continue with life. By supporting HROC, these teachings do not stay in one place but go to other places. If these teachings reach others I think, as a country that has been at war, it will help bring reconciliation and peace.*

# CHANGING LIVES

## BUFIRIKA DEOGRATIAS

Deo is 56 years old and lives in the Mutaho Internally Displaced Persons camp with his wife and younger children. He is the father of ten children though one has died due to illness. His oldest is 35 and lives in the capital city, Bujumbura. His youngest is 13 years old. Deo supports his family as a subsistence farmer. He has not attended the HROC workshop but was able to attend the Alternatives to Violence training in his community. He is very familiar with HROC and knows several HROC participants. He told us he hopes to attend the next available HROC workshop.



We asked him to share his experiences of living in the IDP camp and his life during the Crisis. Deo explained his impressions of how the conflict began. He was very candid in his observations. He also broke the stereotype that only Tutsis were living in the IDP camps. He is Hutu and belonged to the UPRONA party which was a minority political party and predominantly Tutsi. We share his great insights into community and HROC's participation in bringing people together to illustrate the complexity of Burundi's conflict.

*The good thing about living in the camp is there is no fear. However, it is far to cultivate. [People who live in the IDP camps walk hours to their gardens which are their only sources of food.] To find food is difficult. The life in the camp is difficult. You stay in a small place and you don't feel free. In the camp, we all come from different places. We don't know one another. It is sad; there is no life in the camp.*

*When the war began, it was a conflict between political parties. I was a member of the UPRONA party and the president belonged to*

*FRODEBU. After his death, they accused my party of killing him. From that day they could not separate a person's ethnic group from the political parties. I am Hutu and I live in the camp. It is not only for Tutsis. Many people from the minority party live in the camps. Many times they (Hutu rebels) tried to kill me because I belong to UPRONA party. My relatives say to me, "You are no longer Hutu. You are Tutsi because you joined that party." My wife is also a Tutsi.*

*Now the war is not yet over. Maybe the guns have stopped but the bad thoughts and angry feelings are still here among us. Even though I haven't attended HROC I would like to. I have attended a conflict resolution workshop, AVP (Alternatives to Violence Project). I think even those people can still have bad thoughts. Those bad things started with political parties. Some people say they have the political power today. That means that your party has no power so it makes you feel bad. This is not good, it divides us. HROC teachings bring people together slowly, slowly.*

*Now HROC can only invite a few people in each place. They can only invite a few people from the community, the camps and returning from Tanzania. But if you are only a few among many how do you change them? It would help if we had many who were trained. If we had more HROC, people would begin to realize that our bad experiences are not our whole lives. We can have peace.*

We asked Deo if he would like to send a personal message to friends in America and Europe. Here is his message:

*You Americans continue to think about us. Maybe you can influence our leaders and*

*government who imposed on us these bad things. If you start by teaching them peace and reconciliation then it will come down to the communities and we will not see war again.*

*Also, we need help to rebuild our communities and to rebuild the trust so our children can have a good future. We live in small places so when we get angry where can we go? We must all learn to deal with our anger. Now we don't trust each other, so we need to rebuild the trust. We need good leaders who can help us rebuild the trust. Remember us; remember our country is trying to get out of war.*



## **NDAYIZEYE AGNES**

Agnes is 25 years old and lives in the Mutaho area with her mother and six siblings. She is the oldest of the family. She has studied agriculture in secondary school and would like to study at university. Agnes was very young when the crisis began in 1993 but remembers subsequent years of war and a constant military presence in her home community. She shared with us fond memories of her father and his great work as a peacemaker. Her mother has attended HROC workshops and later became a HROC facilitator for the Mutaho

area. We asked Agnes to share some of her experiences of the war.

*We were here on the road and during the war we had seen many soldiers. It was five years ago. We were near them laughing, playing. But then within a few hours they (community members) came with machetes and guns and they were coming to fight the soldiers. They (the community members) began to burn trees and our fence to our home. The soldiers were not coming to do anything bad.*

**“When the war began, my father hid people in our home. People were trying to kill him because of his tribe and because he was helping people from the other tribe. I don’t understand the differences. At school we all live together. I don’t see a difference.”**

*We decided to get away but it was difficult because the trees were on fire. We tried to go down the road but it was full of soldiers. When we finally got home my family took us into the bush, we took refuge for two months. When we returned we found all of our things stolen and our house burned. The church gave us a house to live in.*

*Once, when we were home during the war my sister and I were accompanying a friend. We met two people on the road. They were rebel (Hutus) who had taken much drugs. They wanted to greet us. I was afraid because I thought they would rape and kill us. So we ran and they chased us. My sister ran away from me and one of the men ran behind me. I lost my shoes and I was afraid I’d be raped. He grabbed me and I cried out. He said he would let me go but that he would come back for me. My sister got away and we finally met at home. Neither of us could understand why that happened. Later, when we would see these men in the community we would be scared and they would look shamed.*

*We asked Agnes to share her memories of her mother’s involvement in HROC and if she had seen any differences in her mother. Agnes lost her father, whom she loved very much, to illness. She spoke often of how difficult this was for her. She said her mother was really able to help her and her siblings through the grieving of their father because of her training in HROC.*

*My mom has helped much. HROC has helped my mother and me with the death of my*

*father. I was at school when I heard he had died. I loved him very much. It was so very far for me to walk. But when I got home my mother stayed near me and comforted me. She encouraged me to go back to school. She has used the teachings of HROC to help us with his death.*

*I have seen a change in her from the day she attended the workshop. She shared with us what she has learned. She talks to us about our father’s death. She has a big photo of him in her room and she talks to us of the good days with him. Some days we go to where he is buried and we cry together and we feel better. I know some of the people who attended HROC came to comfort us when we lost my dear father. I see a difference in her. She is able to go to others who are mourning and comfort them as well.*

*When the war began, my father hid people in our home. People were trying to kill him because of his tribe and because he was helping people from the other tribe. I don’t understand the differences. At school we all live together. I don’t see a difference. I don’t understand why there was a difference.*

*She, like so many other young men and women, has lived her childhood in war with all the memories and fears that are buried in it. Like so many others we interviewed, she expressed disbelief that such tragedy could happen. Agnes wants to see Burundi move forward but she also wants to understand how neighbor could kill neighbor.*

## GAKOBWA SARA

Sara is 55 years old and lives in the Mutaho community. She is the mother of Agnes and six other children and also has adopted two children. She is a widow, having lost her husband to a sudden illness. A teacher at the commune primary school and a pastor for the Friends church, Sara is a trained HROC facilitator and organizes local widows for monthly meetings and support groups. Sara also helped organize a visit to Gitega prison where HROC participants met with those accused of participating in the violence to share food and to talk of healing and forgiveness.

While working in Mutaho, Sara opened her home to host us for lunch sharing delicious meals with us. Our conversations were light and playful. She has a beautiful smile and holds herself with great confidence and security. As she began to tell her story there was a dramatic and extreme contrast. Her voice dropped to a whisper and we sat in hunched conversation as her life unfolded before us, highlighting her fear of bringing some things into light.

*Before the war, my family was Hutu but we had neighbors who were Tutsi. My husband was a pastor and there was a clerk who was Tutsi in the same church. When the war started we heard all the Tutsi were being killed. So my husband went to the clerk and offered to hide him. The clerk said, "No let me die. They may come to kill me but I didn't do anything wrong." My husband became very angry and took the clerk by force to the missionary's house and we kept him in the house to be safe.*

*Those who were coming to kill him reached our home and demanded my husband show them the Tutsi man. Then my husband yelled to them, "If you want to kill him start with us!" Truly God did work there because they left us. Because the clerk's Tutsi wife and*



*children were afraid and it was dangerous for them, we brought the clerk food and water. I remember that period was very dangerous and people were coming again to find the Tutsi man. We had to take him to a safer place. So we got the man and together we left with many others who were fleeing to safety.*

*After two months we returned to here while other community members were fleeing. The soldiers asked everyone, "Why do you flee? See the pastor is staying with his family. It is safe here." Slowly, slowly the peace had started.*

We asked Sara what had become of the man that they had risked their lives to hide. She shook her head and said, "Finally, he was killed at Burasira with many others. His wife and children are still alive and live in this community. We are friends to this day." We asked Sara to describe both her first experiences of HROC and how her work as a HROC facilitator impacts her work and life. We asked her how she coped with hearing other's trauma and what she did to care for herself and in turn care for others.

*I remember before HROC it was difficult. I was afraid and it was difficult to talk with people about work and about peace. HROC taught me how to trust again. At the first "training for facilitators", we were with trainers Adrien Niyongabo and Solange, truly that training has opened me and I feel right. From that day I began to teach others, beginning with my children because they too have experienced bad things.*

*These teachings helped me. Once, when my husband was still alive I was here conducting a workshop. They came to me and told me my husband was very sick. I left immediately and took him to the hospital but he died just a few hours later. HROC teachings have allowed me to heal my own broken heart and help my children with their grief. I was afraid because we were in a dangerous situation without him, my husband. It is difficult for a widow. But I was able to comfort others along with myself. And now people come to me to help and I also can help them.*

*It still happens, there are days that I feel my pain. But I have someone I trust who is a pastor. I go and tell him everything that bothers me and afterward I feel good. Today*

*I comfort the widow. Sometimes we have meetings to talk about our loss and find ways to help each other.*

*I see the changes in people and in the community. I see the anger in people over what they lost. Even in my church people are angry over the loss. So many people wish to attend HROC because it helps people deal with anger; they see it in others who have attended. I wish HROC to continue with the whole community. Maybe we could have special workshops for youth, orphans, child soldiers, widows. Also, we have Hutu and Tutsi facilitators but not Twa. In our area, we have not included the Twa, maybe in other areas but not here. We need to include them too, this is important.*

*I thank God because he has a good plan for me. I'm the first and only woman pastor in the Friends church. This is a blessing and a miracle. The leaders of the church said there are not two pastors in the same household so at first they refused to make me a pastor. With my work in HROC I try to help former rebels, children, youth, and widows. I see the hand of God in my work. I see God has a real plan and I see He will use me in all activities.*

## **KAREGEYA ETIENNE**

Etienne is 49 years old and is a cultivator living in Muvanga near Cagura. We met with him at the Catholic mission in Burasira; it was a two hour walk for him to meet with us. Etienne, a member of the Friends Church, has been married to the same woman for over thirty years and has ten children. His oldest is 30 years old and has a family of his own. His youngest child is 4 months old. Etienne has not yet had the opportunity to attend a HROC workshop but expressed a desire to be at the next available workshop His story shares with us the courage and strength that many exercised during the Crisis.



**“ They demanded that I kill the boys with my own hands. I raised my hands and said, “In the name of God, I would not kill and if you raise your hands against us then you too will be killed. ”**

*Before the war I was with my wife and it was a time when God was blessing us, the life was not difficult or expensive. As we had more children it became more difficult but it was not bad. In October of 1993, when the Crisis began, I was working at another church away from my home, helping them build. I heard the president had been killed. I left there to go home. On the way to my home I was met by many problems. I met people who were cutting down trees to close the road to stop people from fleeing. They wanted me to help them. I told them I had walked many miles and was too tired, that I was going to my family.*

*When I finally reached my home, my many neighbors who were Tutsi were there and there were people from the community there to kill them too. They said they were going to kill them because they were Tutsis and they were the ones who killed the president. All of us left my home and we ran. Even at the places we fled, the people wanted to kill them because they were Tutsi. I told the people who wanted to kill them that the Bible says do not kill or you will die. This made them so angry that they tried to kill me too. They beat me but I got away. I made it back home.*

*There were only women and children left in the community because they took all the men. Later I heard that all the men had been killed. There were over fourteen families that lost men, they were never the same. They stayed in my home for over two months. After the two months I learned there were camps for them. So I prepared to take them to the camps. We could not all go at once so I took the first families. We passed with no problems so I and one other of them returned to my home to get the rest of them.*

*Before the last group left my home, Hutus came back to kill them. We locked up my house as they came to us. I told them to kill me first and only then could they kill the other people inside. They told me today was my last day, that they would kill me. I prayed for God to help me. There were three little boys hiding under the bed in my room. And I opened the door to meet the crowd. They searched my home and found the three boys hiding under the bed. They demanded that I kill the boys with my own hands. I raised my hands and said, “In the name of God I would not kill and if you raise your hands against us then you too will be killed.”*

*This made them very angry and they demanded me pay them 6000 Burundian francs [\$6] so that they would not kill any of us. The men in the house went back to the crowd outside and said that I was not hiding anyone and that they should go to the next house. But after this crowd left another group came for us. We were able to flee into the bush and I hid the boys in the bush near my home. When this group searched my home and found it empty they became angry and burned all the trees and bush around my home. They came back to burn my house but by the grace of God they did not.*

*I found the Tutsi boys who were hiding and got them to another province during the night. When we finally heard they had relatives nearby we heard people beating on drums and chanting, “Here are Tutsi—come and kill them”. We found the first group of families who had left my home for the camps by the river. They had all been killed. So we ran again back to my home.*

*In my sector, the commune leader attended the same church as I. I asked him to help me protect these people I was hiding. He wrote a letter stating that anyone who killed another person would be tried as a murderer and would go to prison. When the next group came to my home I showed them the letter signed by the coordinator of the district and they left without harming us. So the Tutsis stayed with me until I could safely walk them to the camps for protection. These people all lived.*

*After the crisis, because many people heard about what I had done, I was invited to speak on the radio in Bujumbura. This is how I helped — by telling their stories. But after that, on my side, it was difficult. People from my tribe (Hutu) hated me because I had helped Tutsis. After the first dangerous time in 1993, the Hutu youth made a group of rebels. Five times they came to kill me because I protected the Tutsi.*

*One day I was at the hospital visiting my brother who was dying. I heard that the day I was with him Hutu rebels came to my home to kill me. Later they sent a small group to demand I give them 200,000 francs [\$200] in order not to kill me. I didn't have that much money so I fled to the IDP camps. But at the camps I was afraid I would be killed in my sleep because I am Hutu. So I would sleep in the forest at night and return to the camp during the day. The Tutsi soldiers at the camp took my things and didn't like me or protect me because I am Hutu.*

*The rebels found me near the camp and demanded I pay them more money for them not to kill me. My wife had our one month old baby with her. They said they would cut my baby into two bodies with their machetes if I didn't pay. I only had 8,000 francs [\$8] with me, so they beat me until I was almost dead. My wife and baby were safe.*

*A Tutsi neighbor took me to the hospital and paid for my care. After returning home from the hospital I needed to feed my family but he helped with that too. Slowly, I found enough food and could grow a few things. We moved back to our home in the community but at night the rebels would come and we would flee into the forest. They would steal our food and our things. One night we were so tired of sleeping in the forest we decided to stay home. The rebels came but we had nothing for them to steal. They beat my wife and I could not stop them. It was so difficult I wanted to kill them.*

*My life and my family's life have not been easy. Even after all of this there was a Tutsi man who accused me of killing a Tutsi. He wanted my property. But I was innocent and they took me to prison anyway. It was very dangerous in prison. I asked God, why did I risk my life and that of my family to help them and now they plan to kill me in saying I killed them. All the people whom I saved went to the judge and asked him to let me go and the judge set me free based on their testimonies.*

*Because of all of this I have changed. Until now I still cannot sleep in my house. I keep thinking people will come in the night to my house and rob or kill me. I cannot sleep inside. I cry much. Sometimes I sit with people but I cannot say anything. I have not yet heard the HROC teachings. We have asked "why there is no HROC in our community?" We need to heal from this trauma. There are many people who have experienced bad things because of the war. They want to share their stories. Many people heard me speak on the radio; they say that hearing my story has helped them. I have not had HROC training I think it would help. People want to tell their stories and hear of others. I hear that HROC teaches of trauma and healing. This is important we need this in our community too.*



## NIYONZIMA CONSOLATTE

Consolatte is 40 year old woman living in the IDP camp near Kibimba. Her husband was killed during the war and she is caring for her four children, her sister's four children as well as her father-in-law's five children. Of the thirteen children the oldest is eighteen years and the youngest is seven years old. She has no income and supports them as a subsistence farmer. Consolatte told us it was very difficult to care for the children as all the people who could help her were killed in the war. She also told us that there has not been enough rain in Burundi these past three years and she cannot grow enough food to feed all the children. Consolatte has attended the HROC workshop in Kibimba.

*Before the war my husband was a driver and my father-in-law was a rich man here. During the war all those things passed away when my husband and father-in-law were killed. No one has experienced this Crisis like me. I am a Hutu and I was married to a Tutsi man.*

*Both sides were out to kill me. The Hutu say, "Why you married to a Tutsi? That makes you a Tutsi." And the Tutsi say, "You're not Tutsi by blood, you are Hutu!" Both sides wanted me dead.*

*Because of that I hated all people from both sides. I couldn't meet a woman who still had her husband. I was jealous because my husband had been killed and hers lived. But after HROC I have seen a change in me. I remember someone came to my house and gave me an invitation. I was asking myself what is this trauma and what is the medicine for trauma? The facilitators said they had no medicine for trauma but together we could find healing.*

*Initially there was no trust between us (Hutus and Tutsis attending the workshop). When I was in HROC that first day I saw my image. How I felt was described exactly in the workshop and I recognized it. It was like I*



# CREATING HOPE

## NKEZABAHIZIL LOUIS

Louis is 33 years old and is living with his wife and three children in the Mutaho area. He was in college when the war began. Louis was working as a policeman for the previous government and stated he is one of the few who were reintegrated into the new police force. He was very shy and reserved when he spoke with us about his own personal experiences.

*When the war began I was in Mutaho going to school. I heard people came to our home in the Karuzi district, stole our things and then burned my family home. I am Tutsi. From 1993 until 1997 I couldn't go back home. So after school I went to Bujumbura and lived for two years. Eventually, I made friends with people who helped me and comforted me and I was able to come back to Mutaho. Here someone helped me build a house. Sometimes I can go and cultivate a plot but it is difficult to find a place to grow food because our neighbors have all the land. Also, I have no other family. My brothers, sisters and parents were all killed in the war. Now it is only me and my youngest brother left. He lives with us in our home.*

We asked Louis to share with us his experiences with the HROC workshop. He had attended the workshop in December of 2005 which was just a few weeks before our interview with him. While he was very cautious in disclosing his personal history and information with us he was quite open with his impressions and the impact HROC had on him.



*I received an invitation for the HROC workshop. Before the invitation I did not know of HROC and I did not know why I was invited. They told me it was a workshop to learn about trauma and healing. I was happy to be invited.*

*In the beginning of the workshop there is a lesson called "Johari's window". It has helped me very much. That window has shown me many things. I've learned the different ways to look at myself and I discovered sometimes you don't know things about yourself. You cannot see it because of your own trauma but others see it in you.*

*I have also learned many other things from the tree of trust and mistrust. It was like my mirror. I couldn't trust anyone. There is truly a change; I see the change in myself and now others can trust me too. For me the trust lesson*

*is most important. There were some people in the community that I couldn't meet or speak to. When I saw them I would get fear. But now we meet and share with each other without fear.*

*I think these teachings have helped. With this new government people have lost their jobs. I was able to remain. I try to talk with them and help them with their loss. In general people are open to talking with me but some are still angry because they have no jobs. They are jealous because I still have mine.*

*At the end of the HROC workshop we all requested to have these teachings given to the whole community. It is a good vision. We need to have meetings with people who have the same problems, to share our experiences together. We need to meet with people outside of Mutaho and visit other communities and share with them. I think it would be a good idea for us to meet with our neighbors in Rwanda to see how they are healing and to share ideas on how we can all heal together.*

**“ We need to meet with people outside of Mutaho and visit other communities and share with them. I think it would be a good idea for us to meet with our neighbors in Rwanda to see how they are healing and to share ideas on how we can all heal together. ”**

### **NDARURUHIRE ZACHARIE**

Zacharie is 41 years old and lives in Cagura with his wife and four sons, the oldest 10 years old and the youngest 4 months old. Zacharie is a subsistence farmer. He has not attended HROC but his wife has attended the workshop conducted in Cagura. When we spoke Zacharie told little of his own story but preferred to share with us the changes he has seen in his wife and in the community.

*When the war began, about one year after my wedding, we needed to leave our place for another province. We had nothing and it was difficult. Then the soldiers came and the shooting began. After a while we heard there was no more fighting near our home. Until then we were living with my mother and it was difficult. It was hard to find food.*

*My wife attended the HROC workshop and I asked her about her experiences. I heard about*



*HROC when she was invited to attend. I don't know why she was invited but I have seen the changes in her. I think HROC is very important. She is my wife and she cannot hide anything from me. She told me what she has seen on that first day of HROC. I knew it was not political teachings but helpful teachings.*

*I know others who have been in HROC. I see the changes in them. Before my wife attended HROC she couldn't let the children be free. Sometimes the children would question her and she would yell at them or respond badly. But after attending I see the change. Now she knows how to speak with them.*

*I have seen it in others in our community. We have a neighbor who had a boutique. One night thieves came to steal his things. When he saw the thieves he fled but his wife could not get away. The thieves cut his wife with a knife. When he returned home he found his wife had been injured, after seeing that he felt very bad. Those neighbors who have attended HROC took his wife to the hospital. The man was traumatized and they went to him and comforted him. Now they are all friends. That is the fruit of this program.*

*Because I have seen the changes I would like to see HROC reach the whole community. This is the first thing that begins reconciliation. I would also like to see us use HROC with development activities. This would allow us to practice reconciliation and conflict resolution in a community project.*

*What I would like to tell people in USA, HROC is helping people after the Crisis with these teachings. I wish to see them developed for the whole community. I wish to attend and become a facilitator because many good changes come from this; it brings us back together. Continue to think about us. We are facing poverty and destruction because of the war. We need you to think about us, care about us and pray for us.*

## HAKIZIMANA ANNE MARIE

Anne Marie is 53 years old, widowed, and currently living in the IDP camp near Kibimba. Before the Crisis she lived in a village near Kibimba. She has always worked as a cultivator to support her seven children. Her experiences during those initial months of the Crisis in 1993 have led Anne Marie both to attend a HROC workshop and to become a facilitator. She is also a coordinator for the Kibimba Peace Committee and works with local women in a sewing cooperative.

Anne Marie's strength is evident in her beautiful smile and caring heart. She and Anna had met on an earlier visit to Burundi. She greeted Anna with open arms and the warmth of sincere friendship. We settled into easy conversation as she shared her difficult past. Anne Marie has told her story in the many workshops she has facilitated and in her work with community members. In contrast to the very stoic Burundian culture, Anne Marie embraces her grief and invites us to cry with her as she shares her loss as well as her joyful hope.

*In 1993 when the war began, the Hutu came and killed all the Tutsi they could find. They came and burned them down. I was near the gas station where they burned the children.*



**It was at Burasira that I met HROC with Adrien and Solange [HROC facilitators]. We were there for two weeks. Those teachings touched me. I saw my image and I cried much during that time. It was like a pouring out slowly, my pain, and from there I felt hope in my heart.**

*We could hear them cry out but we could do nothing. After that day the soldiers (Tutsi) came and took us to Kibimba. When we arrived there were so many bodies laying everywhere. You couldn't tell if they were people or pigs. During the nights I had nightmares; I saw many bodies and I heard the screams.*

*It was at Burasira that I met HROC with Adrien and Solange [HROC facilitators]. We were there for two weeks. Those teachings touched me. I saw my image and I cried much during that time. It was like a pouring out slowly, my pain, and from there I felt hope in my heart.*

*From that day, I went back to where I lived before the war and I greeted people. I talked to my older children. Then I could tell them about HROC. HROC invites those who are most broken. Now in the camp we see positive changes. Those who have not attended the HROC ask, "Please bring us these teachings." It has helped me so much. I couldn't see God without HROC. There are many hearts still broken. People are surprised to see me conducting workshops with both Hutu and Tutsi. Praise God, I would not be as I am today without HROC. There are many people who lost children and cannot forgive Hutu or Tutsi without help*

We asked Anne Marie to share some of her personal experiences with HROC. What did she feel was most helpful for her healing? How does she cope with hearing the tragic stories of other's trauma and what are her hopes for the future of HROC and Burundi?

*Today the two trees of trust and mistrust grow in Burundi. Truly, it has been a long-time with us growing the tree of mistrust. So now we want to grow the tree of trust. The tree of mistrust symbolizes a culture of violence.*

*Through "Johari's window"[an exercise in the HROC workshop] we have seen that people can only see the bad things in other people. But this window also helps us see the good things in others. We learn about trauma. Most people do not know that trauma and the effects of trauma can happen to anyone. They think it is witchcraft.*

*I hear many stories and I see how I can help people. I tell them to think about the scripture, "Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who have sinned against us." We have to forgive them. I cope with my work in many ways. On the days that I cannot sleep, I remember all those bad things that happened to me or to the people I know. But then I try to remember my training and I use techniques I have learned to help me. I also visit with other HROC facilitators if I need to share with them my stress or grief.*

*When I am conducting a workshop I always begin with my experiences. I start with me and you see, when I give my example, this opens people up and they can talk and begin to heal. One day there was a man who took drugs and beat his wife. One day his wife was pregnant and he beat her. He came here and heard HROC. From that day he vowed never to beat his wife. There was another orphan who said, "I couldn't talk to anyone who had parents. But after HROC I understand why I cannot talk to them. I can change." See HROC changes people and helps them.*

*If we had two years of intensive workshops we could reach all of the need of Burundi and be healed. It is difficult to share and give yourself to others so that others may be helped, sometimes in doing so you can re-experience things you have been through. HROC teaches us that this is normal. So you find someone to talk with through your own pain. You must have love.*



**“ Before the workshop I couldn’t think or do activities. My heart told me I wanted to cultivate but then I believed I wouldn’t live to eat the harvest. I had no trust in my own life. Now I have a vision for my life and my family. There are others in the community like I was before HROC. ”**

### KAJANDI JEAN

Jean is 47 years old and has been living in Ruhororo for the past three years. He and his family had been refugees in Tanzania for over eight years. He has six living children, his youngest is 7 and the oldest 18. He has lost four children; three to illness, and one disappeared during the war. He has worked as a builder but he and his family has been forced into subsistence farming due to lack of work.

We asked Jean to talk about his life during the war and his experiences of living in Tanzania with his family. Having participated in the HROC workshop he shared his thoughts and impressions of that experience as well.

*Before the war I was a builder. I had a boutique that sold food and things. When the war began all those things were stolen; all my cows gone, I had nothing. So, I took my family to Tanzania. We walked. It took us over two weeks to reach the border. This was in 1996.*

*I found many Burundians there. It was difficult to adapt to the food they gave us. It made us very sick. In the camp we lived in there were*

*over 40,000 people, all from Burundi. Life in the camps is very difficult. Many people accept that they will die. Sometimes you only received food two times a month but it was only enough for one week. Many decided they don’t want to die in a foreign country so they go back home even though it isn’t safe. They know they will die one way or another and they want to die at home; so they go.*

*I was so happy to attend HROC because it was difficult for me to find other people to share and talk with. When we fled, people came and killed my child. Even me, they cut me with machetes. That is a difficult thing to share with others. But in the workshop we could share our bad experiences with each other. We have experienced bad things, but differently. We have to continue to live, we have to survive.*

*Before the workshop I couldn’t think or do activities. My heart told me I wanted to cultivate but then I believed I wouldn’t live to eat the harvest. I had no trust in my own life. Now I have a vision for my life and my family. There are others in the community like I was*

*before HROC. When I see them I go be with them, counsel them, and comfort them. I listen to their problems.*

*HROC teachings have been prepared specifically for the experiences of Burundians. I have seen a challenge in this community. It is still not united. Some still live in the camps while others live in the community. It is not easy to trust one another when they are always segregated.*

*People see a difference in me. I am the coordinator of this sector [a local government official]. When we are in meetings I try to use these teachings. Sometimes when people do not understand why I use this in my work they come to my home and I explain it to them. Then they want to know more.*

*If possible I would like to see HROC at every community level. Maybe find a group of people in each sector who are trained with resources to help at the local community level. It helps,*

*talking with someone. You compare your life before and after and you see how it can help others. I think we should have community celebrations about HROC and drumming celebrations. We need to bring people together. Maybe if we had community projects that allowed us to practice reconciliation while we made things for the community this would help.*

*To the USA and Europe:*

*We Burundians are suffering the consequences of conflict. Pray for us so that we may not know war again. Help us with the trauma we have experienced. We need these teachings to heal and not to return to conflict. We need projects to practice reconciliation but also to help us develop and grow together as on Burundi. When you have the same activity it strengthens your relationship. I want to see HROC developed for all Burundians. Our friends are suffering from the war, please pray for us.*



## **SIBOMANA MAMERTHE**

Mamerthe is 46 years old and has been living in Ruhuroro IDP camp since 1994. She first fled with her family to Ngozi during the beginning of the war but later moved to the camp when the heavy fighting began again. Her husband was killed during the initial stages of the Crisis in 1993. She has four living children ranging from ages 24 to 13 years old. She lost her first born son to malaria. Mamerthe supports her family as a cultivator and became a HROC facilitator in 2005. We asked her to share her personal experiences during the Crisis and how her work with HROC has affected her and her community.

*I remember in 1993, I was cultivating. I heard they were arresting people who were not of*

the same ethnic group. I came home to find my husband there. He was with the children. At first he told me things had changed in the community. I told him I too had heard that they were arresting people. After a few minutes they (Hutus) came to our home and took him away. They wanted him, so at night they waited for him. When they took him they said they were only arresting him and taking him to the prison.

In the morning, I was going to take him food and water at the prison. I remember hearing this voice in my head. It told me to take time for prayer and to stay home. During my prayer I saw white things floating around our house and I was afraid. I tried to open my eyes. When I stepped outside of my house there were many people with machetes surrounding our home. They left and went to kill my father-in-law. I heard as they called out to him, "Did you hear what happened? The president is dead." Then they said it was his fault and they would kill him in revenge. They took him alone but said they would come back for the women and children. We knew they were killing our husbands and our people so we ran to the other hills and found people hiding like us.

We passed there a whole day. During the night people told us to go home, so we did. After a very long trip we made it to my birthplace, but even after one day the rebels found us and we fled on to Ngozi. In that morning, someone came and confirmed that my husband and brother had been killed. The people who killed my husband were our Hutu

neighbors. They said that we Tutsi killed the president. Even though I have experienced many bad things God protected me and my children.

Before HROC I was invited to a THARS workshop (Trauma Healing and Reconciliation Services) in Ngozi. But my firstborn son was too sick for me to go. It was in that sickness that he died. Afterward, I received another invitation to attend the basic HROC workshop being held in Cagura. After I completed that workshop I was invited to HROC training for facilitators' workshop. I have facilitated one workshop in Cagura.

From those workshops I realized that no person can live or grow with trauma. Through these teachings I saw myself, how I was traumatized. I saw that I was not alone in these problems. One girl had many problems. She had stopped her studies because of the war and had a big scar on her head where they cut her with a machete. She couldn't talk. During the basic workshop we saw that we are traumatized. They told us if we know others who are traumatized we can work together to find a counselor. Now I help the girl from the workshop. When I lost my firstborn my trauma grew and it was too much to bear. But I realized that talking about loss and grief is helpful.

Before HROC I used to be very angry and I couldn't trust anyone. Sometimes I had problems with my children. I talked badly to them. In HROC we have an exercise, "Johari's

**“ From those workshops I realized that no person can live or grow with trauma. Through these teachings I saw myself, how I was traumatized. I saw that I was not alone in these problems. One girl had many problems. She had stopped her studies because of the war and had a big scar on her head where they cut her with a machete. She couldn't talk....Now I help the girl from the workshop. ”**

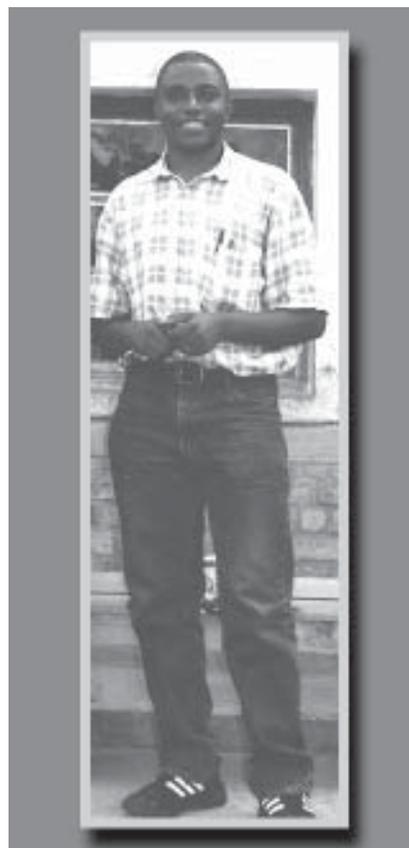
*Window". It helped me to see myself differently. Mostly with the death of my firstborn I couldn't talk to anyone about that. But I have seen the healing in sharing your loss and pain with others.*

*I have also seen changes in other participants. My neighbor who had many problems lost all of her children in the war and adopted an orphan. Her family would not accept her or her adopted child and from that day they hated her. I went to her to counsel and comfort her. She went to the HROC workshop. Slowly, she and her family have begun to speak to one another. She is still caring for the child. Things are better for them.*

*There is another widow who lost all her children during the war. She said all the people hated her. She would avoid people on the street if she saw them. She said that all people wanted to poison her. We, from the HROC workshop, tried to help her, show her love and that she is not alone. We tell her we have experienced similar problems. Today she will meet with people and sometimes she even laughs.*

*As a facilitator I continue to learn from the people we are sharing with. This is very good for me. We see the changes from those who have attended HROC. In the camps there are boys who were young soldiers. After attending HROC they share and help their families more and are now even working in the community.*

*Sometimes it is hard and heavy for me to hear other people's trauma. I can hear many bad stories. Sometimes the stories touch me deeply but sometimes what I hear strengthens me because I know others are being helped by this too. Right now, I don't have another person I can speak too when I have difficulty with others stories. So I cope as I can. Where I live in the camp we have many women, orphans and girls who need help. It would be nice to have counselors to help.*



### **NIYONGABO ADRIEN**

Adrien is 34 years old, married with three children and is the director of the Healing and Rebuilding Our Communities program in Burundi. He first became interested in trauma healing through his involvement with Trauma Healing and Reconciliation Services (THARS). Adrien stated that while it was important for individual healing to take place it was also crucial to understand the importance of the community role in the healing process.

Adrien is a member of Kamenge Friends Church. He shared his personal experience of the Crisis. Adrien explained that he was motivated to develop HROC because, while addressing his own need to understand the trauma of the Crisis, he learned that healing is facilitated by understanding.

*In 1993, just two months after the death of the President, Tutsi soldiers were out patrolling to move Tutsi into safe areas. As they were*

helping Tutsi to safety, they were also targeting Hutus as they were helping the Tutsi to safety. Many of us (Hutus) were running to the mountains, trying to escape the killing. There were some Hutus with guns as well helping us.

There were two men with guns who stopped me. They said, "You are Tutsi, why are you running? You are not one of us." I was shocked and I said, "What?" They said, "You are Tutsi and you are here to investigate us, to see how we are set up so you can go back and tell them how things are and then your generals will come and kill us." I could not believe this. I thought they were joking because I am Hutu.

The men with the guns said no more words and pointed the guns at me. I was waiting for the last second before I died. Then suddenly another man appeared beside me and he asked the soldiers why they were pointing their guns at me. The soldiers told him, "It's because he is a Tutsi spy." The man said, "No, I know him. His father is a Hutu; he is a Hutu." Then they released me and I was allowed to go.

That really has stayed in my memory. I was caught in the confusion. I was caught in the stereotypes they used to recognize Hutu from Tutsi. There have been so many mixed marriages of Hutus marrying Tutsis and Tutsis marrying Hutus so the kids look like both groups! You can be Tutsi but you look like your momma Hutu and vice versa.

I think many people have died because of this confusion. They say Tutsi are tall guys, not very strong, thin with long face and long nose. Hutus are short with a large face and a large nose too. But me, I was young and tall and very thin. I was 21 and people thought I looked like a Tutsi.

That night I slept in the bush. I had no other choice. I was afraid that someone else would mistake me for a Tutsi and try to kill me so I

hid in the bush so no one would see me. So I made this prayer, "If I get an opportunity to live I would work toward reconciliation." I was a Catholic; I didn't know Friends at this time. I did escape.

Another night, in 1995, I went to visit a friend of mine and I stayed away from the campus where I was a student. So I wasn't on campus the night it began. I returned the next morning and I saw many of my friends carrying their luggage and I asked them, "Where are you going?" They told me that students, Tutsi students killed Hutu students on campus. Tutsi soldiers who were in Bujumbura organized these students. I don't know why they organized these horrible things.

Although my mother is Tutsi, I am Hutu because my father is Hutu. I would have been killed if I had been on campus that night. My friends told me to leave with them because the campus was no longer safe for Hutus. Because I thought I may have to travel for a while and would need my things, I decided I would go back to my room and get a few things, some clothes, some soap, my toothbrush..

My family situation had not been very good as my father left us when I was eight and my mother didn't have a lot of money. When it was time for me to flee the campus I had no place to go. Finally a friend who lived in the mountains said I could go and stay with his family. I lived there for four months. They loved me, they supported me. They were very kind because I didn't have any money or way to help them.

It was not really safe in Burundi at that time. You would hear that there were many things happening all over the country. There would be fighting in the north the next morning you may hear it was in the east. It was not all here in Bujumbura.

*Later in 1995, when I had to abandon my own studies at the University because of more killings during the Crisis. I became very traumatized. I didn't want to see the campus. I didn't want to visit my friends who were studying there. So when I heard about the church asking for help with trauma work I thought this could help me with my own trauma. I had no other purpose in the beginning.*

*I told my wife that I want to do this work for my sake, for my healing. Finally, I got accepted into the training program and that's how I began this work. Now I am thinking about that announcement in church that brought me to this work. I didn't think about that promise I made but now I see it.*

Adrien's story shows the extreme dangers of not looking beyond the stereotypes and how inaccurate they can be. From his own traumatic experiences Adrien has found the strength to both learn how to heal from his trauma and loss and to help others as they engage in this healing process. He helps individuals and also entire community groups to challenge deadly stereotypes and seek healing as a whole community.



# CONCLUSION

**Healing and Rebuilding Our Communities** has had an important impact on the lives of those who have had the opportunity to participate. Many told us they were surprised and honored when they received their initial invitation to attend the workshop. Every person interviewed expressed the importance of being able to come together in a safe place to share their experiences and hear the stories of their neighbors. Many shared that they thought they were alone in their experience of the genocide and following conflicts. While they still recognized that they had experienced great trauma there was a sense of relief to know they were not alone in their experiences. Even those who had not attended HROC workshops spoke of the importance of sharing their stories with others and being with others.

Many participants shared that HROC was the first time they were able to see how their attitudes and behaviors affected those around them. Many reported that they were able to see his or herself in a very different light. Through their HROC experience many found ways of identifying hurtful behavior and finding new ways to deal with their anger so that it didn't hurt others or themselves.

It quickly became evident that there is a deep hunger for trust to grow in Burundi. Obstacles to this growth were named as hunger, poverty, increase in illnesses, fewer plots for cultivation and the divided communities, such as those still living in IDP camps. Everyone we interviewed has a sincere recognition of the reason why this trust is slow in coming. There seemed to be a willingness to continue to work to deepen the trust. Poverty and destroyed housing are the obstacles preventing people from returning to their original communities.

All interviewees expressed an urgent desire to see the HROC program available to all community members and leaders. Many stated they would like to see HROC develop programs that would take current teachings to a deeper level, expanding the opportunities for communities to work on reconciliation, development and forgiveness. It was recognized that to help strengthen the tentative peace which has begun in Burundi much more work is needed.

HROC is currently exploring possibilities of offering an advanced workshop and creating a community support program that would train local community

members to act as healing companions in Burundi. These companions would be able to build support networks at the local level that would meet the specific needs of that community. Narrative therapy, or story therapy, could have a powerful impact in these communities. Future program planning should examine narrative therapy as a possibility.

As we sat with those we interviewed, it was obvious to us that they are eager to see a lasting peace. They are hyperaware of potential dangers that could prevent peace from happening. It was stated that even though the guns have stopped the war still is being fought in the hearts and minds of many who were deeply traumatized by the Crisis and the continued poverty. Many believe that HROC and supporting

programs can open hearts to understanding the sources of their pain and anger and begin the process for reconciliation and healing.

HROC gives participants the opportunity to recognize and name the trauma. This recognition allows the experiences to be seen by the individuals as well as the other participants. It begins to bring their experiences into a common Light. HROC invites the story of the individual to join the story of the "enemy" or "the other" and begin the process of rewriting the story as the community story. It is no longer just the individual's pain or loss but it is the understanding that their story is a part of the community experience of pain, loss and eventually hope for healing together so they can continue the story.



## REFLECTIONS ON WHAT BURUNDIANS TAUGHT ME

*To work for peace is to uproot war from ourselves and from the hearts of men and women. To do this we must learn to listen in a way that helps to understand the suffering of others, to see the real casualties of war.*

Tich Nhat Hanh

I, Anna, am writing this reflection for my own benefit in hopes that it will speak to you as well. As I go through the individual accounts and interviews we gathered over our three weeks in Burundi I am once again humbled and amazed. I am humbled because I met with sincere gratitude for my willingness to bear witness and be present with each person as they told their story for the record. I hope they know what an honor it was for me to be with them. I am amazed because I learned we should never underestimate the human capacity to forgive; such capacity is a Divine blessing which gives us the strength we need to realize peace within our lifetime.

With my all too-American "if it's broke fix-it" mentality I felt that merely being present was not enough, especially for friends like Consile. Slowly, I am learning that a willingness to accompany someone who is suffering assures them they are not alone and the pain is not entirely pointless. Sometimes, no matter how much power or privilege you hold in this world, there are immediate sufferings you cannot alleviate. That does not, however, give us permission to abandon them in their struggle. I learned that presence is powerful and often graciously accepted as enough.

Deo taught me that holding the individual person and the relationship is important above all. He said that Burundians couldn't separate the people from the political parties. I find that to be incredibly important and pertinent with the United States divided along political lines that sever relationships and undermine our ability to work with one another toward realistic solutions. We no longer see each other as neighbors but as Republicans or Democrats, Pro-Life or Pro-Choice, Conservative or Liberal. We are no longer people but polarized categories. Where do we devolve to when we can no longer discuss our conflicts respectfully and honorably?

I learned that fear, pain and anger can cause us to act in ways we never imagined. I learned that until the moment is before us, none of us knows if we will have the strength to refuse to kill an innocent or be swept along in the frenzied mob. Sometimes it is difficult to determine innocence; blind justice or self-preservation lead us to acts of violence or heroism which we cannot comprehend later. Sometimes the most difficult person to forgive is yourself. More importantly, forgiveness is the gift of freedom and healing you give to yourself; it is not amnesty for the offender. It

**Slowly, I am learning that a willingness to accompany someone who is suffering assures them they are not alone and the pain is not entirely pointless. Sometimes, no matter how much power or privilege you hold in this world, there are immediate sufferings you cannot alleviate. That does not, however, give us permission to abandon them in their struggle. I learned that presence is powerful and often graciously accepted as enough.**

is an offering of healing that opens the community toward reconciliation.

I believe there are many Americans who are living in cycles of violence and who live with the collective trauma of their personal and our historical pasts. We may hear about posttraumatic stress disorder on the news and in reports but do we really understand its

roots? Do we know about the trees of mistrust that are planted in our families and communities and the bad fruits they bear? Do we know what we do to others out of our own fear and pain? Can we forgive ourselves once we do? Do we know where to find the trees of trust; and then, do we know how to plant them in our own communities?

**I don't know if Healing and Rebuilding our Communities has all the answers for bringing about world peace. But I do know that people living in a much wounded nation who have been at war for years are beginning to experience a transforming power that is leading them gently, although cautiously, into the Light of healing and forgiveness. In America, we are blessed with many things, but, I can think of nothing greater than the ability to learn to live in loving community with each other. We have an opportunity to understand the root of our fears and our eagerness to lash out to protect all our things which we hold so dear. What freedom we could gain if we were able to acknowledge the pain we have inflicted and endured. Again, innocence is not so easy to see and justice has many perspectives. What a difference we could make if we would willingly come together to see all sides of the story. In doing so, I think we could begin to replace the roots of war with the roots of peace.**

# RECOVERING FROM VIOLENT CONFLICT:

## AN EVALUATION OF HEALING AND REBUILDING OUR COMMUNITY WORKSHOPS IN BURUNDI

By Peter Yeomans

### **Summary**

Seventy-eight Burundians with substantial traumatic histories were tested before and after their participation in the Healing and Rebuilding Our Community (HROC) workshop series. Changes in psychological symptoms and their perspectives on reconciliation and security in their communities were assessed. Specific posttraumatic stress symptoms and more general symptoms of stress (anxiety, depression, and somatization) were significantly reduced. The participants demonstrated a substantial decrease in psychological symptoms that is especially impressive given that the total time during which HROC staff were in direct contact with participants did not exceed one week over six months. Such results implicate either a tremendous responsiveness to the workshop itself or a gradual healing over months that was put in motion by the initial workshop and then reinforced periodically by staff and other participants.

### **Primary hypotheses**

The purpose of this evaluation effort was to assess both psychological symptoms and psychosocial attitudes before and after participation in the workshop series. Specifically, we predicted that traumatic stress and general stress systems would be significantly reduced after participation in the HROC program. We also predicted that attitudes and behaviors would shift significantly in the direction of increased reconciliation and trust in the community after participation in the HROC program.

### **Methods**

#### *Participants*

Between June and November 2005 HROC offered a series of trauma healing workshop for members of the communities surrounding Burasira, north-central Burundi. These

communities included the Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) camps of Cagura and Ruhororo. The series of workshop had three stages and included six groups of 20 persons. First, each group participated in a three-day workshop. A month or two later each workshop group regathered for a follow-up day. Finally, all six workshop groups were combined and the larger community was invited to join them for a community celebration day to mark the conclusion of the program. This workshop series ranged over a period of six months.

Demographic data showed that among the 78 study participants, 28 (36%) were female and 50 (64%) were male. The mean age was 37.7 years ( $SD = 13.6$ ). Seventy-four percent were married and 19.2% were widows. The mean number of birth children was 4.9 and the number of "adopted" children was .5. Only 14% of the sample had completed more than six years of education. Among the portion of the sample that lived in the IDP camp (44.7%), the mean length of residence was 10.5 years.

Our understanding that community representatives had invited equal numbers of each ethnicity had to serve as a proxy for explicit solicitation of ethnicity as such questions are considered inappropriate and divisive. Thus, we can only infer that representation of each ethnicity (Hutu and Tutsi) was balanced within the sample. All participants had been directly victimized by violence during or since 1993; a few were returnees from Tanzania who fled the conflict and had recently repatriated.

#### *Procedures*

The interview was translated into Kirundi. Burundian staff then backtranslated the interview into English to verify that the intended meaning was maintained. Interviews

were conducted by two Burundians. Participants were told that the purpose of the interview was to collect data for research on outcomes associated with their future workshop participation. Most participants were not fully literate, so as necessary, items were administered verbally. The options reflected in the questions were demonstrated visually by showing pictures of glasses with varying degrees of water in them.

Each participant responded to a semi-structured interview composed of both open-ended and standardized questions. First they identified the significant traumatic events that they had experienced since 1993, and were asked to choose the event that was “most distressful.” In reference to that event they then responded a series of open-ended questions about how they felt they had been affected by the event. Questions were phrased so that they did not lead the participant to think that the interviewer expected a particular answer. The central question was “What are the main problems that affect you as a result of those events?” The questions explored what the participant remembered thinking and feeling during the experience, how they remember the experience now and what they

associate with it, and in what ways other people perceive them as different from prior to the experience. They then completed four short questionnaires on psychological distress that are commonly used in international settings. These four measures described specific Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) symptoms, general symptoms of anxiety and depression, and somatic complaints. The interview closed with 23 questions developed by the research team that aimed to capture current opinions and self-reported behaviors indicative of levels of reconciliation, security, and trust across ethnic differences.

## Results

### *Event history*

The frequencies with which participants endorsed each item as an event they had experienced or witnessed are listed on the back cover.

Across these nineteen items, the mean number of events experienced was 9.5 and the mean number of events experienced, witnessed, or heard about was 16. The event that participants identified as “most distressful” is reported below.

### *Frequency of selected “most distressful” event*

Event	Frequency of selection
Family member(s) killed	28.2%
Almost killed	23.1%
Flight and homelessness	12.8%
Loss of house and possessions	10.3%
Arrest/prison	3.8%
Poverty	3.8%
Raped	2.6%
No food or water	2.6%
Robbed	2.6%
Family member almost killed	2.6%
Other	5.6%

For 58.5% of the participants, their self-identified most distressful event took place eleven or twelve years ago. All other participants chose events that occurred more recently. It is notable that there were no significant differences in events experienced between IDP camp residents (almost all Tutsi) and those living in the community (almost all Hutu) with one exception. IDP camp residents had experienced significantly more “serious physical injuries from combat.”

*Psychological symptoms prior to workshop participation*

Level of anxiety and somatization were markedly higher than (Western) psychiatric inpatient norms. Depressive symptoms were comparable to what would be found in a (Western) psychiatric inpatient sample. In this sample 32.1% exceeded the clinical cutoff (based on non-Western norms) in the depression subscale and 57.7% in the anxiety subscale. Thus, these nonspecific symptoms of anxiety, depression, and somatization generally exceeded inpatient psychiatric norms and were endorsed at considerably higher rates. Meanwhile specific PTSD symptoms were not as evident as might be anticipated. Despite an extensive trauma history, only 11.5% of the sample exceeded the predetermined cut-off indicative of being symptomatic for PTSD.

*Types of responses to open-ended questions*

Frequency of responses to the open-ended questions were counted. Though not intended for pre and post measurement, these responses capture how the participants described the nature of their distress in their own words and without hearing prompts. Frequencies reported on the table below reflect the percentage of the sample that reported the number of symptoms/responses at the head of the column.

*Changes in symptoms*

Symptoms were assessed before and after the HROC workshop series using the same measures. All psychological symptoms, PTSD, general anxiety, depression, and somatic complaints, showed significant reduction at the post-test.

*Changes in psychosocial attitudes*

One possible explanation is that there has been a process of natural recovery during the interim period. Most participants suffered the bulk of their traumatic events between 1993 and 1996. Given the continued but intermittent civil war and general lack of security within the community, there is reason to suspect that many participants experienced traumatic events in the more recent years leading up to our study.

A second possibility is that participants are underreporting. The Burundian interviewers, whose presence should have facilitated disclosure, stated that they did not think that participants were generally underreporting. In fact, staff observed that participants were often very eager to disclose the ways in which they had been affected by their experiences. It is difficult to support an argument for the possibility of the specific underreporting of PTSD symptoms, when

*Frequency of responses from open-ended questions as to how participant was affected by event*

Category	Number of Symptoms/responses		
	1	2	>2
Posttraumatic Stress Disorder— liberal	50.0%	28.2%	14.1%
Posttraumatic Stress Disorder—conservative	30.8%	6.4%	2.6%
Major Depression Episode	20.8%	1.3%	0%
Nonspecific depression	38.5%	2.6%	0%
Nonspecific anxiety	30.8%	3.8%	0%
Material	70.5%	15.4%	3.8%
Somatic/medical	23.1%	2.6%	0%
Anger	11.5%	0%	0%
Bad/evil thoughts	21.8%	1.3%	0%
Thoughts of revenge	12.8%	0%	0%

material complaints and certain symptoms were endorsed at substantial levels.

A third explanation for the low levels of PTSD in this sample is that PTSD symptoms do not accurately capture the type of post-traumatic stress reactions of these individuals. Clearly, a trauma history in this sample is associated with diverse elevated symptoms (and material complaints) as opposed to being limited to predominately specific PTSD symptoms. This difference relates to continued debate regarding the degree to which PTSD best describes a non-Western traumatic stress reaction.

As stated earlier, with one exception, there were no differences in symptoms or traumatic even histories between IDP camp residents and those living in the community. This result contradicts the perspective that one side of the conflict has suffered more severely than the other. Generally speaking, and with the caveat that IDP camp resident/nonresident is a somewhat inadequate proxy for ethnicity, these results suggest that both sides suffered the same experiences and both sides are currently feeling the same effects of these experiences.

#### *Qualitative symptom report*

The qualitative data suggest that PTSD symptoms are just one of a number of symptomatic profiles associated with a traumatic history. Material needs consistently outweighed psychological ones and mixed anxiety and depression fit the profile better than specific PTSD symptoms.

#### *Outcomes after workshop participation*

Participants registered significant and dramatic reduction across all symptom measures. While there was no comparison group by which to eliminate the effect of time and other nonspecific variables, there is good reason to suspect that the HROC workshop series is responsible for these reductions in symptoms. While both specific PTSD symptoms and more general symptoms of stress (anxiety, depression, and somatization) were significantly reduced, it was the latter that was higher at baseline and which saw greater reduction.

Significant changes were not evident in the psychosocial measure that had been designed to capture changes in opinions and behavior around issues of reconciliation. This was at least partly due to the fact that most participants endorsed high levels of trust and reconciliation *prior* to the workshop series. The exact reason for this is unknown as many observe that relationships within the communities are still strained. One possible explanation is that they rated the state of reconciliation compared to how it was in 1993. From this perspective, most community members would report that relations were strong and dramatically improved.

#### *Study limitations*

Certain limitations of the study warrant discussion. Our assessments were largely symptom focused, as in most similar studies, failed to assess sufficiently the degree to which these symptoms were truly impacting functioning. Throughout this study we are working with the limitation of having used Western models of psychological distress and Western models of research. The degree to which these models capture the experiences and the psychological/psychosocial changes in a non-Western sample should always be assumed cautiously and with respect for the pronounced cultural differences that exist.

#### **Conclusion**

This study provides empirical evidence that corroborates the many testimonials of HROC participants who report who they have been helped by the trauma healing workshops. The participants demonstrated a substantial decrease in psychological symptoms that is especially impressive given that the total time during which staff were in direct contact with participants was equivalent to one week over six months. Such results implicate either a tremendous responsiveness to the workshop itself or a gradual healing over months that is put in motion by the initial workshop and then reinforced periodically by staff and other participants.

Note: This article a summary of a longer report. Complete information on statistical analyses, procedures, and related studies are available in the full paper which is available at [www.aglionline.org](http://www.aglionline.org).

## **Appendix A—Methodology**

We met in four communities in Burundi where HROC has conducted workshops: Kibimba; Mutaho; Cagura; and, Ruyigi. We interviewed 41 persons, 23 male and 18 female. Persons interviewed fit into one of four categories; those who had participated in the HROC workshop, those who lived with someone who had participated in a HROC workshop, HROC facilitators, and finally, community members who had heard of HROC but had not attended HROC nor lived with anyone who had attended a HROC workshop.

For each specific group we outlined a series of open ended questions (appendix B) which had been translated into Kirundi. All interviews were approximately one to two hours long and were translated from English to Kirundi and Kirundi to English. Responses were recorded on an eco-map assessment form and narratives were also written during the interviews while the interviewee spoke in Kirundi and answers were translated into English. Interviewees were selected by HROC facilitators in their respective communities.

**Interview Questions** (Please visit [www.aglionline.org](http://www.aglionline.org) for a list of questions)

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## **Authors Biography**

**Theoneste Bizimana** is the Healing and Rebuilding Our Communities coordinator for Rwanda. He likes this work because it allows him to better understand his own trauma and use that understanding to help others. Theoneste is also an Alternatives to Violence Project (AVP) facilitator and conducts workshops in Rwanda. He is currently working on a degree in sociology and plans to continue his work with local communities on rebuilding a peaceful Rwanda and Africa. He is a member of the Religious Society of Friends

**Anna Sandidge**, a Friend, works with communities emerging from conflict. She has facilitated workshops on unconditional listening and has co-facilitated workshops on dialogue, healing and multicultural issues in reconciliation. She has recently been working in Rwanda and Burundi, Africa with trauma healing groups working on reconciliation after the genocide. Anna received her Psychological Anthropology degree in 2001 and her Master's in Community Social Work in 2004. She was an organizer for the St. Louis based Instead of War Coalition. She is currently the Coordinator for Friends Peace Teams.

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**Traumatic Events Survey  
from Healing and Rebuilding Our Communities  
Cagura, Burundi Evaluation 2005**

Seventy-eight out of eighty participants in four HROC workshops in Cagura, Burundi were asked to endorse items from a list of nineteen possible traumatic events as listed in the Harvard Traumatic Questionnaire-Part I. Participants were roughly half Hutu living in the community and half Tutsi living in an internally displaced persons' camp. The frequencies with which participants endorsed each item as an event they had experienced or witnessed is listed in the Table below. Across these nineteen items, the mean number of events experienced was 9.5.

	Experienced	Witnessed
Lack of shelter	97.4%	-
Lack of food and water	96.2%	2.6%
Ill health and no medical care	96.2%	2.6%
Loss of personal property	91.0%	.3%
Combat situation	100 %	-
Narrowly escaping death	78.2%	16.7%
Rape	11.5%	20.5%
Sexual abuse/humiliation	7.7%	7.9%
Serious physical injury from combat	17.9%	9.0%
Forced to hide	100 %	-
Forced to hide among the dead	12.8%	15.4%
Betrayed and placed at risk of death	33.3%	14.1%
Confined to indoors because of danger	82.1%	2.6%
Forced to harm or kill a family member or friend	11.5%	16.7%
Forced to harm or kill a stranger	16.7%	14.1%
Disappearance/kidnapping of spouse	12.9%	25.7%
Disappearance/kidnapping of son or daughter	5.1%	5.1%
Imprisonment	19.2%	33.3%