



Interpeace
INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION
FOR PEACEBUILDING



Sweden
Sverige

Societal Healing Programme in Rwanda

**“Reinforcing community capacity for
social cohesion and reconciliation through
societal trauma healing in Rwanda”**



PRISON FELLOWSHIP
RWANDA



HAGURUKA
Defending the rights of women and children



Overview

Interpeace is an international peacebuilding organisation with 30 years of experience in Africa, the Middle East, Asia, Europe and Latin America. In Rwanda, Interpeace is collaborating with the government and with non-governmental actors to deliver programming on societal healing and participatory governance. Interpeace's current programme in Rwanda reinforces mental health and psychosocial support, social cohesion, and prisoner rehabilitation and reintegration and promotes collaborative livelihoods. In this way, the programme addresses invisible wounds from the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi, including elevated levels of mental health challenges as identified in the Rwanda Mental Health Survey (2018).

Structured psychosocial tools or "protocols" have been developed in the framework of the programme to guide interventions on community and family healing dialogues, psychosocial rehabilitation of prisoners and collaborative livelihoods projects.

With funding from the Government of Sweden, the programme is delivering support in Ngoma, Nyagatare, Musanze, Nyabihu and Nyamagabe districts in partnership with local organisations such as Prison Fellowship Rwanda, Haguruuka and Dignity in Detention Rwanda. Building on a successful European Union-supported pilot in Bugesera district (October 2020-December 2022), this initiative epitomises Interpeace's commitment to healing and resilience in Rwandan communities.



Programme pillars of intervention

1. Mental health and psychosocial support

By establishing resilience-oriented healing spaces in health centres and in the community, training mental-health professionals, decentralising care and fostering co-ordination for mental-health support, the programme catalyses the mutual healing and mental resilience of individuals experiencing mental-health issues that stem from the genocide and its aftermath



"I lived an unhappy life, I always felt lonely and would not want to socialise with others. I did not even feel the need or the energy to work or bathe. I had constant headaches and stomach aches of which I did not know the cause. After the group, I feel relieved and can now join others and socialise with anybody. I have regained interest and enthusiasm in engaging in economic activities. I no longer fixate on the things I cannot control."

– a female genocide-survivor participant, Nyabihu district.

2. Social cohesion

Community-based sociotherapy healing spaces constitute part of the social cohesion pillar, which restores relationships and promotes trust, forgiveness and reconciliation. In parallel, multifamily therapy healing spaces facilitate intergenerational dialogue, promote positive masculinity and parenting practices to address interfamily and intrafamily conflicts, and improve family communication and harmony.

"I carried a constant sense of guilt for my crimes during the genocide. However, after participating in the healing space, specifically during the phase of safety and new life orientation, I gradually began to alleviate my feelings of guilt through sharing with others. Being in the same group with genocide survivors and other members of the community helped me finding real peace of mind."

– a genocide perpetrator, Busogo Sector, Musanze District.

"The conflict with my wife had negatively affected my children. They considered me a monster. After sorting out our problems and improving communication between us we have become a happy family. My children are remarkably close to me now; we spend time together and that has created positive memories. Today, I feel proud of the father I have become thanks to multifamily healing dialogues."

– a male parent, Nyamagabe District.



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3. Prisoner rehabilitation and reintegration

Many genocide perpetrators are presently coming to the end of their sentences and returning to their communities. Effective prisoner rehabilitation and reintegration has therefore become essential to maintaining peace and cohesion within and across families and communities. Through this programme pillar, Interpeace and its partners have developed a standardised prisoner rehabilitation curriculum to guide interventions on the psychological rehabilitation of inmates. The curriculum promotes vocational training and strengthens correctional officers' ability to support inmates towards reintegration. Furthermore, sociotherapy and resilience-oriented therapy healing spaces have been set up in four prisons for the programme to provide inmates with psychosocial support services.

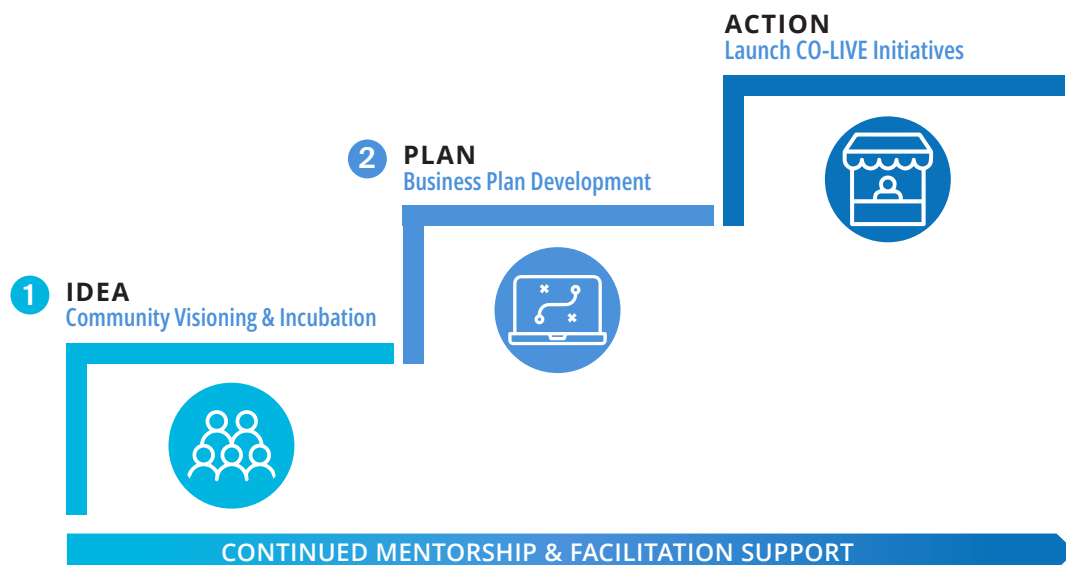
"Being imprisoned and separated from my family was a total shock for me. Before joining the sociotherapy healing group, I was highly depressed and had no peace of mind. My intention was to commit suicide. I had imagined some techniques on how do it that I watched in movies before imprisonment. I had planned to use a sharp object to open my veins and die by bleeding or use acid to poison myself. Sociotherapy saved my life. It helped me to overcome my distress and accept my fate. I have regained hope, and I will be released soon."

– a female prisoner, Nyamagabe prison.



4. Collaborative livelihoods

Sustainable peace and socio-economic well-being are intertwined. Through the collaborative livelihoods protocol, community members who have completed healing and social cohesion dialogues are supported to conceptualise, incubate and manage joint income-generating projects in areas such as agribusiness, livestock, retail, tailoring and welding to simultaneously improve their livelihoods and sustain the bonds formed with their cohort contacts in the healing spaces.



5. Research and knowledge development

Peacebuilding must apply approaches and forms of intervention that are grounded in evidence and local contexts. To achieve this, the programme partners have developed tools to generate evidence and have organised policy dialogues on the findings derived from participatory action research.

MHPSS Developed Protocols/tools

1. Mental Health

- Resilience -oriented therapy protocol
- Socioemotional skills curriculum

2. Social Cohesion

- Socioterapy protocol (adaptations)
- Multi-family therapy protocol
- Prisoner rehabilitation and reintegration curriculum
- Positive Masculinity & Positive parenting Curriculum
- Conflict Mediation Curriculum

3. Livelihoods

- Collaborative livelihood (Co-Live) protocol

6. Strengthening local capacities

To achieve long-lasting impact and change, Interpeace recruits community dialogue facilitators – people selected from local communities who undergo comprehensive training – to facilitate healing spaces within their respective communities. These facilitators remain instrumental in addressing community issues, nurturing relationships and fostering cohesion. Interpeace also works closely with government institutions, local partners and civil-society organisations to strengthen local capacities and promote cross-sector co-ordination. This co-operation also empowers the local partners to adopt and implement contextualised tools or protocols in their own societal healing initiatives.



Partners

Government partners



Local partners



Donor





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