AEGIS
PREVENTING CRIMES AGAINST HUMANITY

Livelihood recovery for peace and reconciliation

The case of Rukara Reconciliation Village

By: HABYARIMANA Heli

Funded by: The New Zealand Embassy

October, 2024

TABLE OF CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY 1

INTRODUCTION 1

Background and significance 1

Objectives and questions 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE 3

Peacebuilding approaches and models 3

Reconciliation 5

Peacebuilding and reconciliation in Rwanda 6

Reconciliation village model and livelihood recovery 8

METHODOLOGY 10

Design approach and methods 10

Past and present of Rukara study site 12

Socio-demographic overview of Rukara Reconciliation Village 14

About PeacEdu Initiative Rwanda 15

FINDINGS 16

Identified livelihood capacities 16

Enhancing societal belonging 18

Putting common interests above private ones 18

Mediating healing and inner peace 18

Acquiring different values through role modelling 19

Nurturing collaboration and healthy relationships 19

Rediscovering self-worth and dignity 20

Creating safe spaces for discussion, reflection and story sharing 20

Ownership of the model 21

Monitoring and evaluation 21

Youth involvement 22

Cultural back-up and embeddedness 22

Scalability and transferability 23

DISCUSSION 24

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS 27

APPENDICES 30

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The study examines whether and how livelihood capacities contribute to peace and reconciliation efforts in Rukara Reconciliation Village. It also assesses the extent and the conditions for the transferability of the model to other contexts faced with past or ongoing violence and conflict. Using the constructivism paradigm, the case study design and qualitative research approach, the study analyzed the experiences of individuals and the community at large in their real-life context. The study population comprised members of the village, the leadership of PeacEdu Initiative Rwanda, and key informants purposively and conveniently sampled because they hold relevant information on the matter at hand. Data were collected using focus group discussions, semi-structured individual interviews, site observations, and documentary research. The data analysis followed the thematic analysis technique by identifying patterns, codes, categories, and themes.

The research argues that livelihood activities carried out by PeacEdu Initiative Rwanda in Rukara Reconciliation Village take on different forms, mainly, the construction and renovation of houses, construction of kitchen gardens, provision of livestock, payment of community-based health insurance, establishment of savings and loan associations, and donating school materials. These activities generally contribute to asset acquisition and income generation, all of which contribute to the well-being and financial capacity of concerned individuals and groups.

The study shows that the above-mentioned livelihood capacities lead to a number of peace and reconciliation outcomes, mainly, enhancing societal belonging, putting common interests above private ones, mediating healing and fostering inner peace, acquiring different values through role modelling, nurturing collaboration and healthy relationships, rediscovering self-worth and dignity, and creating spaces for discussion, reflection and story sharing. It is found that the livelihood activities have a significant impact on enhancing social cohesion, healing history-related wounds among genocide survivors and perpetrators, addressing different forms of violence, upholding peace-laden values and active citizenship, restoring self-esteem, fostering forgiveness, and building trust in the community. Results show that members of Rukara Reconciliation Village have been able to define, share, develop and sustain healthy and meaningful relationships through the activities carried out together from 2019 to date. Community members have developed a sense of ownership of the livelihood activities and are committed to sustain their outcomes, especially because they are part of their daily life and are enshrined in their culture.

The study argues that the results obtained in Rukara Reconciliation Village in terms of promoting peace and reconciliation through the development of livelihood capacities could be scaled up to other parts of Rwanda. Communities outside the country may also draw significant lessons from the reconciliation village and devise exit strategies for the respective conflicts prevailing in their respective communities. Nevertheless, there is a need to contextualize and tailor the livelihood capacities to community needs and goals. The present paper is organized into four sections: introduction, literature review, results and discussion.

INTRODUCTION

This report seeks to document the contribution of livelihood activities to peace and reconciliation in Rukara Reconciliation Village. Carried out in Rukara Cell, Rukara Sector of Kayonza District, the study attempts to show how livelihood capacities have contributed to peace and reconciliation among genocide survivors and released perpetrators.

The present section provides the background and significance of the research, its objectives and questions, and a brief description of the methods. These elements justify this study on peace and reconciliation through livelihood activities in the context of a rural village made up of separate farmsteads scattered throughout the area.

Background and significance

After the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi, Rwandans had to face the task of rebuilding and reuniting the country. On the one hand, the country had to move towards progress, and on the other hand, it was important not to forget the horrors of the genocide. In this regard, different peace education initiatives were created at different

levels in an attempt to heal wounds and restore social cohesion. Here, peace education should be understood as the transmission and acquisition of knowledge, skills, attitudes, behaviours, and worldviews that promote the culture of peace, where diversity is respected, difference is tolerated, dialogue is encouraged, and conflicts are solved in a spirit of mutual understanding and cooperation.[1]

The academic literature shows that benefits of peace education go beyond the purpose of promoting the culture of peace. For instance, Asamonye et al. describe the benefits of peace education as a network or the "sun light" or "positive energy donor,"[2] of which the integral parts are: forgiveness, global happiness, union, economic development, capacity building, social transformation, dialogue, conflict resolution, reconciliation, commitment to love, care and community livelihood. Maxwell et al. added that livelihoods are fundamentally about what people do to meet their needs over time, including how they cope with and recover from shocks. Considering the context, needs and priorities of the Rwandan population, post-conflict livelihood[3] recovery programmes should not be neglected in any peace education endeavour. This combination of peace education activities and livelihood programmes as essentially compatible was quickly understood by PeacEdu Initiative Rwanda.

PeacEdu Initiative Rwanda is a non-governmental organization engaged and dedicated to prevent genocide and mass atrocities through education. The organization is involved in reconciliation by improving the socio-economic conditions of the beneficiary community. The idea was to bring about lasting peace through poverty reduction and provision of basic needs by involving Rukara Reconciliation Village residents in several programmes that would take them out of violent conditions. This was done through a series of joint peacebuilding and healing activities deeply anchored on storytelling, forgiveness, and resilience.

The present study shows that, inspired and enabled in part by peace education programmes, Rukara Reconciliation Village translates a sense of "hope" in the ability of humans to apologize, forgive and move on towards progress. Moreover, the village experience could serve as a model for other contexts where peacebuilding and peace education are still a challenge. It is worth remembering that unity and reconciliation in Rwanda are seen as a "responsibility of every Rwandan and every institution" and these values remain "the only option for peace that Rwanda chose to undertake after the discriminatory and divisive politics that plunged the country into wars and the genocide against the Tutsi." [4]

Objectives and questions

This study examines whether and how livelihood activities have contributed to peace and reconciliation efforts in Rukara Reconciliation Village. Specifically, it seeks to (i) highlight livelihood capacities demonstrated by the village members in response to individual and collective stressors, (ii) examine the extent to which the identified capacities contribute to peacebuilding and reconciliation outcomes, and (iii) assess the sustainability of the Rukara Reconciliation Village model and its transferability to other contexts.

The research attempted to answer the main question as to whether and how livelihoods have contributed to peace and reconciliation efforts in Rukara Reconciliation Village. Specifically, it responds to the following questions:

i. What livelihood capacities do village communities demonstrate in response to individual and collective stressors?

ii. To what extent do these capacities affect peacebuilding and reconciliation outcomes?

iii. To what extent do the findings of the study make connections with other contexts in peacebuilding, and in what ways can the Rukara Reconciliation Village model be scaled up?

[1] Monisha Bajaj, "Pedagogies of Resistance and Critical Peace Education Praxis," *Journal of Peace Education* 12, no. 2, (2015): 154–166.

[2] Catherine Chinyere Asamonye, Love Osuagwu, and Rose Ekwuru Kalu, "Peace Education and Economic Development of African States: The Nigerian Situation," *World Educators Forum* 3, no. 1 (2016): 1–10.

[3] Daniel Maxwell, Dyan Mazurana, Michael Wagner, and Rachel Slater, *Livelihoods, Conflict and Recovery: Findings from the Secure Livelihoods Research Consortium* (London: Secure Livelihoods Research Consortium, 2017).

[4] National Unity and Reconciliation Commission (NURC), *National Policy on Unity and Reconciliation* (Kigali, 2007), 23.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

A number of studies on peacebuilding, reconciliation and livelihood have been conducted in various parts of the world, some of them reflecting unique cases. The following paragraphs make a case for various models of peacebuilding and reconciliation, including the establishment of reconciliation villages, and studies conducted on reconciliation model villages.

In post conflict contexts, peacebuilding is taken among the priorities. Maiese defined "peacebuilding" as referring to a wide range of activities associated with capacity building, reconciliation, and societal transformation, concern for being and repairing, or positive transformation of broken human relationships.[5] Peacebuilding adds peaceful, social or economic development to the concept of conflict resolution. These transformational interventions, when carried out by community members or parties to the conflict, are characterized as community-based peacebuilding interventions with the aim to seek to transform relationships and empower local people to play their role in confidence-building and self-worth.[6]

Peacebuilding approaches and models

The academic literature distinguishes between top-down and bottom-up peacebuilding approaches. Top-down peacebuilding involves the absence of large-scale violence as a result of state action. Coyne assimilated it to the terms Pax Romana, Pax Britannica, *Pax Americana or Pax imperii.*[7] It always begins with securitization, followed by disarming and demobilizing armed rebels, protecting civilians from violence and facilitating humanitarian access. In addition, the top-down peacebuilding approach posits that the source of peace and order is top-down intervention made and controlled by the state or international actors, powerful states and leading international organizations. They further have powers not only "to label conflicts and conflict actors," where some conflicts may be referred to as "insurgencies" or "civil wars," but also to determine solutions in line with their standard operating procedures or "best practices;" this in the absence of the parties to the conflict.[8] In the case of the bottom-up approach, the individual is elevated over the state and organizations as the central source of peacebuilding[9]. Peace therefore emerges from micro-level capacities continually obtained, promoted and adapted through time and contexts. These horizontal relationships, instead of vertical forces, constitute the main drivers of peacebuilding.

From the above approaches, three peacebuilding models were identified to cater for different components judged as most important for building and sustaining peace in specific contexts. There are liberal, hybrid, and perpetual models.[10] The liberal peacebuilding model works at the social and state level to reach the "tranquility of order" in post-conflict societies.[11] From the Western standpoint, the model promotes Western liberal values such as the rule of law, a free market economy, democracy, protection of individual rights and international efforts. It puts an emphasis on top-down approaches, seeking to build states' institutions instead of working with the grassroots population.[12] Thus, the liberal model posits that peace can only be achieved in the international arena when these Western values are implemented, as long as they are seen as synonymous with order, stability and peace. The model has been most visible in societies undergoing Western-backed peace support interventions in war-torn societies, on the one hand. On the other hand, some developing countries without any experience of war in the recent past have undergone the liberal peace process through disciplining societies,

[5] Michelle Maiese, *Establishment of Personal Relationships, Moving beyond Intractability* (MBI) (St. Suite, 2016).

[6] Governance and Social Development Resource Centre (GSDRC), *Community-Based Approaches to Peacebuilding in Conflict-Affected and Fragile Contexts* (University of Birmingham: International Development Department, 2009).

[7] Christopher James Coyne, *Peacemaking: Top-Down vs. Bottom-Up*. GMU Working Paper in Economics (2023): 2, https://ssrn.com/abstract=4566357.

[8] Pamina Firchow and Roger Mac Ginty, "Top-Down and Bottom-Up Narratives of Peace and Conflict," Politics 36, no. 3 (2016): 2.

[9] Coyne, *Peacemaking*, 2.

[10] Roger Mac Ginty, "Hybrid Peace: The Interaction between Top-Down and Bottom-Up Peace," Security Dialogue 4, no. 4 (2010): 391–412.

[11] Adebayo Olukoshi, "The Role of Civil Society in Peacebuilding: A Nigerian Perspective," in *Peacebuilding and State Building: An Uncertain Partnership*, eds D. Carment and P. James (2017): 93–110.

[12] Mariana Morena Pereira, "The Liberal Peace and its Contesting Universal Values: A Theoretical Approach to the Development of Hybrid Forms of Political Order in Post Conflict Societies," *Brazilian Journal of International Relations* 8, no. 2 (2019): 427–453.

governments and economies under the umbrella of "good governance," "poverty reduction strategy papers" and "reform."[13] Nevertheless, it should be noted that the international liberal values are not universal. There are other manners and paths to help communities build their peace in non-Western realities. On that, local actors may either join efforts with international interveners, or be given voice and autonomy to promote a peaceful environment, as long as they better understand the traditional and customary realities of their respective communities and institutions.[14]

The hybrid peacebuilding model puts its main emphasis on the "local" and "bottom-up practices" to attain a genuine peace[15], and its mixture with the liberal peace model has potential to create a durable and sustainable peace. The model emerged from the weakness and critiques of liberal peacebuilding, especially the liberal efforts driven by international actors while disconnected from the daily life of the local people, their prevalent practices and values. Through breaking the domination of the liberal peace approach, the hybrid peacebuilding strand considers local actors as key peace promoters because they have cognition of culture, customs and traditions.[16] It posits that the praxis of peacebuilding should accommodate underlying issues such as the social welfare, justice, needs, and culture earlier marginalized within the liberal practice of peacebuilding. Moreover, the model proposes that various institutions, norms, interests, and values can be negotiated with "the universal human values advocated by the liberal peace approach."[17] Nevertheless, critics cautioned the use of the model with regard to potential discrepancies between liberal and local practices which can impede one another or negatively affect the peacebuilding efforts.

Perpetual peacebuilding, as the third model, emerged in response to the non-linear nature of peace processes. In fact, the liberal peacebuilding strand advocated for a rigid set of phases comprising the ceasefire, then initiation of pre-negotiations and negotiations, supporting and funding the implementation of a settlement, after which elections and liberal institution-building would follow. Instead, perpetual peacebuilding posits that "phases of peace processes are indefinite and occur under different labels and within various formats,"[19] as well, they may entail continual negotiations and further dialogues about the multiple and mixed relationships which constitute societies or communities. Paffenholz summarized the tenets of the perpetual peacebuilding model as non-linearity and the complex reality of peacebuilding, the abandonment of notions of success and failure in peace, the recognition of the complexity of peacebuilding terms and concepts, and becoming critical on the side of practitioners.[20] Indeed, peace processes involve a series of negotiations, in different spaces and formats, across several periods of time. Last, there is no solution, but rather, adapted pathways to peacebuilding.

The liberal peacebuilding model translates the top-down approach of peace, perpetuating the political philosophy of liberalism and liberal international order, aiming at proactive nation-state activities to yield peace. These vertical relations deny the grassroots participation of community members. In contrast, hybrid and perpetual peacebuilding models consider the complexity of peace processes and offer a wider perspective of local ownership and community-based participation to peacebuilding in relevant contexts.

For peacebuilding actions to be effective, research has recommended the necessity for them to be carried out through an integrated or holistic approach. For this, peacebuilding is analyzed from a multidimensional perspective, where peacebuilding structures address all root causes of violent conflict and support indigenous capacities for peace management and conflict resolution.[21] Peacebuilding is not confined to a single domain or activity, rather, it embraces

[13] Mac Ginty, "Hybrid Peace," 394.

[14] Pereira, "The Liberal Peace," 439.

[15] Syaiful Anam, "Peacebuilding: The Shift towards a Hybrid Peace Approach," *Global Strategies* 9, no. 1 (2015): 37–48, https://doi.org/10.20473/jgs.9.1.2.

[16] Mac Ginty, "Hybrid Peace," 402.

[17] Anam, "Peacebuilding," 41.

[18] Mac Ginty, "Hybrid Peace," 402.

[19] Thania Paffenholz, "Perpetual Peacebuilding: A New Paradigm to Move beyond the Linearity of Liberal Peacebuilding," *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding* 15, no. 3 (2021): 372.

[20] Paffenholz, "Perpetual Peacebuilding," 377.

[21] Johan Galtung, "Violence, Peace, and Peace Research," Journal of Peace Research 6, no. 3 (1969): 167–191.

various domains, activities and dimensions to form a peacebuilding continuum[22] that brings together conflict prevention, conflict resolution, protection, sustainability, socio-economic recovery, human rights, etc.

The present study finds it necessary to understand peacebuilding as multifaceted and multidimensional to integrate livelihood into the wider range of components needed to be fulfilled for sustainable peace. The research is committed to the view that the peacebuilding process is not linear, and its priorities and opportunities may change over time, depending on who is involved and how they have preferred to get rid of their conflict. It can be argued that the Rukara Reconciliation Village model can be better placed within the overall peacebuilding frameworks of hybrid and perpetual strands.

Reconciliation

The concept of reconciliation, being closely linked to peacebuilding, is worth explaining for the purpose of the current study. Its general meaning involves processes of creating normal or good relations between states, groups, organizations and individuals, in reaction to past or present incidents, injustices and human rights violations. The latter may include civil wars, genocides, atrocities, forced displacement, slavery, dictatorship, oppression, colonialism, or apartheid. Four approaches of reconciliation are read from Peña, namely, moral reconciliation, liberal reconciliation, agonistic reconciliation, and reconciliation as interdependence.[23] Moral reconciliation puts forgiveness at the centre for social restoration and the creation of norms of coexistence. In fact, individuals have to change their attitudes to overcome the negative emotions taken as natural responses to abuse. Also characterized as "interpersonal reconciliation,"[24] moral reconciliation occurs between two people or groups, sometimes with individuals. Restorative justice remains a key component of moral reconciliation, as it posits healing and justice of the victim through truth telling, empathetic reception, and identity recognition.

Second, liberal reconciliation focuses on the establishment of the rule of law and liberal institutions, instead of depending on forgiveness. Also described as "national reconciliation" or "thin reconciliation," it assumes that former enemies are unlikely to get along very well, instead developing a political culture that is respectful of the human rights of all people as the only suitable alternative.[25] In lieu of restorative justice, the liberal model of reconciliation favours transitional justice to address the effects of mass human rights abuses and ensures non-repetition. The type of justice involved in liberal reconciliation does not repair damaged relationships or produce social restoration. Rather, it seeks to rehabilitate the perpetrators by judging and punishing their personal responsibility, on the one hand, and victims through material reparation and reinstatement of their rights as citizens, on the other.[26]

Agonistic reconciliation is the third model, that emphasizes creating an open political space seen as "the surest sign of progress toward reconciliation."[27] In fact, peaceful coexistence does not rely on forgiveness or the establishment of liberal institutions only, but rather on "the cultivation of differences and disagreements."[28] Agonists argue that conflict is not a negative dynamic, rather, "an essential dynamic that allows opposing groups to actively contest their future ways of living together."[29] Therefore, the best way to resolve conflicts between peoples consists of putting in

[22] Alphonso Groenewald and Gerrit Van der Waldt, "A Strategic and Integrated Approach to South African Peace-Building: The Case of the Department of International Relations and Cooperation," *Administratio Publica* 26, no. 4 (2018):133–150.

[23] Luis Berneth Peña, "Theories of Reconciliation – Basic Coordinates for Navigating Debates on Building Better Relationships in Societies in Transition," in *Reconciliation, Heritage and Social Inclusion in the Middle East and North Africa*, eds. I. M. Dajani and M. Leiner (2022), https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-08713-4_5.

[24] NURC, *Unity and Reconciliation Process in Rwanda 20 Years after the 1994 Genocide Perpetrated against Tutsi* (Kigali: NURC, 2014): 42.

[25] NURC, *Unity and Reconciliation Process*, 43.

[26] Peña, "Theories of Reconciliation," 73.

[27] Peña, "Theories of Reconciliation," 74.

[28] Peña, "Theories of Reconciliation," 75.

[29] Sarah Maddisson, "Agonistic Reconciliation: Inclusion, Decolonisation and the Need for Radical Innovation," *Third World Quarterly* 43, no. 6 (2022): 1309

place a policy that enables "the full inclusion" of the peoples in the society and its institutions. Reconciliation is viewed as a process that replaces social divisions with a shared sense of belonging in the nation, where people are part of a "unified political community" within "a harmonious and integrated society."[30]

Last, the interdependence model of reconciliation recognizes the utmost importance of cooperation between parties to the conflict for the success of the reconciliation endeavour. It entails the building and sustaining of good and fair relationships with trust among persons or groups "to handle the conflicts and problems that will inevitably arise in the course of time."[31] The merit of the model has been stated as its potential "to operate vertically by trying to restore relations between citizens and the state and horizontally, improving social cohesion marked by fairness and inclusion,"[32] which has made it seen as a holistic and practical approach to reconciliation.

The above models unveil prominent dimensions to be considered for successful reconciliation, including the change of attitudes between parties involved in a conflict, restoration of the victims' dignity and rights, material-economic reparation, prosecution of the perpetrators, knowledge of the truth and memory work, opening of the political space or creation of a political community, and promotion of the sense of interdependence. The following paragraphs showcase reconciliation models at work in Rwanda and those informing the Rukara Reconciliation Village.

Peacebuilding and reconciliation in Rwanda

For the case of Rwanda, the country was in great need of peacebuilding and reconciliation interventions, especially after the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi. In fact, the genocide created a deep gap between genocide survivors and former genocide perpetrators, and their respective family members. Suspicion existed among both sides, one suspecting the other of planning to commit further forms of violence, either that survivors would take revenge on former genocide perpetrators, or that perpetrators would begin killing Tutsi survivors again.[33] It is in that context that the concept of reconciliation has also proven its relevance. For Govier and Verwoerd, reconciliation involved "a coming together after a rift that undermined trust between the parties, and making it difficult for those harmed to trust those who have harmed them."[34] It is the rebuilding of a relationship in the aftermath of tension or alienation, with confident expectations that individual persons or groups of people act or will act in an adequate and convenient way, so that none will be harmed.[35]

Rwandans embarked on the journey of peacebuilding and reconciliation through the pathways of moral reconciliation, agonistic reconciliation, and interdependence models. The National Unity and Reconciliation Commission (NURC) expressed the interplay between intrapersonal reconciliation, interpersonal reconciliation and political reconciliation, which, through enabling tolerance, justice, democracy, human rights culture, conflict resolution, transparency, and public debate, brought about the success of reconciliation efforts made.[36] For this, various mechanisms were put in place and facilitated by different stakeholders including political and administrative institutions, non-governmental organizations, and faith-based organizations. There were also other reconciliation and peacebuilding initiatives promoted and implemented through non-formal and informal settings.

[30] Bashir Bashir and Will Kymlicka, "Introduction: Struggles for Inclusion and Reconciliation in Modern Democracies, in *The Politics of Reconciliation in Multicultural Societies*, eds. B. Bashir and W. Kymilicka (2008): 13.

[31] Trudy Govier and Wilhelm Verwoerd, "Trust and the Problem of National Reconciliation," *Philosophy of the Social Sciences* 32, no. 2 (2020): 186.

[32] Peña, "Theories of Reconciliation," 78.

[33] Faustin Mafeza, "Restoring Relationship between Former Genocide Perpetrators and Survivors of Genocide against Tutsi in Rwanda through Reconciliation Villages," *International Journal of Development and Sustainability* 2, no. 2 (2013): 787–798.

[34] Govier and Verwoerd, "Trust," 185.

[35] Govier and Verwoerd, "Trust," 186.

[36] NURC, Unity and Reconciliation Process, 83.

Institutional, legal and policy mechanisms, as well as a strong political will and good governance framework, laid the groundwork for many reconciliation programmes and strategies. They enabled a favourable platform for constructive contact and dialogue, good governance mechanisms, justice and security, and construction and reinforcement of national identity of Rwandanness.[37] In fact, institutions dedicated to promoting peacebuilding and reconciliation were put in place, such as the National Unity and Reconciliation Commission in 1999 and the National Itorero Commission in 2013, which were later merged into the Ministry of National Unity and Civic Engagement (MINUBUMWE) in 2021. While fulfilling their responsibilities, they developed, disseminated, implemented and monitored national policies, strategies and programmes related to ensuring unity and peace among Rwandans, recovery and resilience, patriotism and citizenship, among others. They laid a foundation for national consultations and dialogue, at both the grassroot and leadership levels, which enabled Rwandans to get together to talk about the history of their country, for people to correct their false perception of their national history, and to engage in building a new Rwanda that is respectful of human rights.[38] Restorative justice, especially through Gacaca jurisdiction, has contributed since 2003 to ending the culture of impunity beyond the dominant discourse of retributive or deterrent justice. In addition, it brought about truth telling, apology, forgiveness, and an opportunity for social cohesion, trust, healing, and envisioning a better shared future. The Rwanda Reconciliation Barometer 2020 revealed that more than 78% of Rwandans attested to living in harmony, and 89.8% on average trusted national institutions. As for the national identity and dignity (Ndi Umunyarwanda programme), it was restored to the extent that over 90% stated to be proud of their children being Rwandans.[39]

Peacebuilding and reconciliation mechanisms have been also implemented at the grassroot level through civil society and the beneficiaries. In fact, non-governmental organizations focused on specific aspects like addressing the issue of trauma counselling and rehabilitation of people psychologically affected by genocide, teaching about genocide and its prevention, remembrance, and commemoration, and the rehabilitation of survivors of genocide, which played an important role in conflict resolution in the post-genocide period.[40] Moreover, faith-based institutions, motivated by a deep sense of responsibility, felt their mandate to build peace and reconciliation. Thus, most of them were involved in social activities, such as those oriented to alleviating the impacts of genocide, and working with people from different backgrounds. From a religious perspective, intrapersonal and interpersonal relationships were built through faith-based commemoration of the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi, Sunday worship and sessions of prayer, social assistance and interfamily marriage.[41] The inter-religious dialogue further contributed to the prevention of religious-based conflicts.

Another arena of peacebuilding and reconciliation was found in non-formal and informal settings at the grassroot level. Indeed, adults and young people had a need to be informed about critical issues of peace and reconciliation, and therefore forums were created to serve as channels to transmit knowledge and the practice of peace and reconciliation. Examples of such platforms include (i) Umugoroba w'imiryango (Parents' Evening Forum), where family matters, mostly conflict and violence, are discussed; (ii) Umuganda (community work), which culturally refers to citizens' joint work to achieve a range of societal objectives; and (iii) Inteko z'abaturage (Citizens' Councils), which bring together village or cell members to discuss issues or problems that the community is facing, including but not limited to conflicts and violence.[42]

[37] National Itorero Commission (NIC), *National Itorero Commission Strategy* (Kigali: NIC, 2011).

[38] NURC, *Unity and Reconciliation Process*, 43.

[39] NURC, *Rwanda Reconciliation Barometer* 2020 (Kigali: NURC, 2021): 50.

[40] François Masabo, "Role of Civil Society Organizations in Conflict and Post-Conflict Situations in Rwanda," *Journal of African Conflicts and Peace Studies* 3, no. 2 (2017): 16–37.

[41] Célestin Nsengimana, *Peacebuilding Initiatives of the Presbyterian Church in the Post-Genocide Rwandan Society: An Impact Assessment* (Geneva: Globethics.net: 2015): 99.

[42] NURC, *Unity and Reconciliation Process*, 139.

Reconciliation village model and livelihood recovery

Although the above-mentioned mechanisms were implemented across the country, reconciliation villages constituted specific fields of experience of the processes and outcomes of peacebuilding and reconciliation in Rwanda. The establishment and functioning of reconciliation villages mostly fall under the pathways towards moral and interdependence models of reconciliation. In fact, the concept of a reconciliation village involves the resettlement of the ex-perpetrators (those who had demonstrated genuine remorse for their actions) in villages of survivors, that is, the families of the victims of the genocide.[43] The initiation and establishment of such reconciliation villages went through a difficult route, where it was required to work hard on the side of both perpetrators and survivors. An eyewitness stated that, on the one hand, it was necessary to introduce to the perpetrators the notion of confessing and seeking forgiveness for their crimes, and on the other, genocide survivors had to be prepared to be receptive to the confessions, and find a place to forgive.[44] It took a long time and a lot of effort, but definitely it has worked, although it was socially and psychologically hard for an offender and a victim to live in harmony after a crime like genocide that caused gross psychological, economic and emotional damage. The motive behind the idea of reconciliation villages is that, despite the incompatibility between victims and perpetrators, which can be easily justified in many ways, society needs to heal and be cohesive for progress to be realized.[45]

Experience from the already established reconciliation villages in Bugesera, Ngoma, Musanze and Kayonza Districts has proven that "they stand not only as a monument of Rwanda's history but also as an example to future generations that unity and reconciliation can be achieved."[46] Besides, beneficiaries or inhabitants of the villages do not hesitate to testify about the transformation which has taken place in their hearts, minds and practical daily life. Such a transformation is the outcome of a peace-driven philosophy and praxis which deeply characterizes the ethos in the reconciliation model villages. This idea aligns with Mafeza's statement that people drawn into networks of cooperation and exchange become tied together by their practical economic interests, which influence their new view of their interests and engagements, and newly made commitments.[47] In the villages, people gradually learn to see each other as members of a family and to recognize their own interest through upholding common rights.

The livelihood recovery has gone hand in hand with peacebuilding and reconciliation activities in the villages. According to Young et al., livelihoods comprise "the ways in which people access and mobilize resources that enable them to pursue goals necessary for their survival and longer-term well-being, and thereby reduce the vulnerability created and exacerbated by conflict."[48] The emphasis and prominence are placed on the notions of survival and longer-term well-being of individuals and groups affected by the conflict.[49] Livelihood also involves the capabilities, assets and activities required for a means of living, which enable people to cope with and recover from stress and shocks, maintain or enhance their capabilities and assets, and provide sustainable life opportunities for themselves and the next generation.[50] This study therefore considers livelihood as entailing the means of securing the basic necessities such as food, water, shelter and clothing, participation in community-level activities, and all essential items for everyday life and over everyone's lifespan.

The notion of the livelihood framework was explained in reference to different components that interact for effectiveness. The first component involves "assets," also referred to as "resources" or "what people have." Talking about assets leads

[43] Srinivasa Shenoy, "Reconciliation Village – the Unity Experiment in Rwanda," *New York Times*, April 2017, https://www.nytimes.com/2017/04/25/world/africa/rwandans-carry-on-side-by-side-two-decades-after-genocide.html.

[44] Shenoy, "Reconciliation Village."

[45] Marie Anne Dushimimana and Joost Bastmeijer, "Rwanda, Part 4: The 'Reconciliation Villages' Where Genocide Survivor and Perpetrator Live Side by Side," The New Humanitarian, May 2019, https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/special-report/2019/05/20/rwanda-reconciliation-villages-genocide-survivor-perpetrator.

[46] Tesi Kaven, "A Story of Reconciliation, Healing and Hope," Forbes Africa, June, 2021, https://www.forbesafrica.com/focus/2021/06/23/a-story-of-reconciliation-healing-and-hope.

[47] Mafeza, "Restoring Relationship," 795.

[48] Helen Young, Diane Holland, Wendy Johnecheck, and Helen Sida.2002. "Livelihoods and Chronic Conflict: An Annotated Bibliography". Working Paper 184. Overseas Development Institute, London, v.

[49] Marian Koster, "Fragmented Lives: Reconstructing Rural Livelihoods in Post-Genocide Rwanda" (PhD thesis, Wageningen University, 2008), 69.

[50] Interpeace, Mind the Peace: Integrating MHPSS, *Peacebuilding and Livelihood Programming – A Guidance Framework for Practitioners* (Geneva/Nairobi: 2022).

to the notions of property, networks, financial capital, social capital, labour, production and the health status of individuals or groups. The second component is the "vulnerability context" of persons or groups, referring to the lack of ability to cope with their stress and shocks. Each individual or group has its internal dimension of entitlement failures and lack of access to specific capital.[51] As far as the post-genocide situation is concerned, both survivors and perpetrators experienced, to different degrees, internal failures and inabilities, to the point that they needed recovery from the disastrous situations of genocide and its aftermath. Rwandans were affected, at different levels, by asset breakdown as a result of conflict. Thus, being able to cope with that stress and those shocks denotes the level of livelihood achieved by and within a certain community.

Transforming structures and processes comes in as the third component that involves policies, institutions, social relations, etc., which can inhibit or facilitate the ability of people to achieve desired outcomes.[52] Critical at this stage is the enabling environment for livelihood, where different government and community-based programmes such as reconciliation villages, unity clubs and forums work together for the unity and reconciliation of people in a specific zone or countrywide. It is worth mentioning that, after genocide, different programmes were set up for doing justice, healing the wounds, fostering social cohesion, fighting injustice, poverty alleviation and promoting development, to cite only some of them. The transforming structures and processes are linked with livelihood strategies, which refer to the activities generating the means of household survival and long-term well-being. In fact, they comprise practical activities such as agriculture, building houses, and other income generating activities, which allow the return from experienced crisis to a state of normalcy.

The last component is stated as "livelihood outcomes or goals," referring to the improved conditions resulting from the livelihood strategies pursued. They are positive outcomes comprising more income generation, increased well-being, reduced vulnerability, and improved social relationships, to mention only some of them.[53] As far as the current study is concerned, the livelihood ingredients comprise the villagers' assets, their vulnerability and how to effectively cope with it, the enabling environment and strategies put in place for them to achieve peace and reconciliation.

Livelihood recovery is closely linked to peace, and it may even be taken as an instrument for peace. Kvitashvili explained that livelihood support should not be seen as a substitute for conflict resolution and peacebuilding, but "it may resolve some of the tension and urgency surrounding the conflict."[54] It can be an important tool for ending violence and hostilities, since it helps restore resources and access to resources, which builds "a foundation for peace and reconciliation." Knowing that conflict damages livelihood, ending conflict may restore livelihood, and restored livelihood contributes to resolving the conflict. Additionally, livelihoods have been proven important to build mutual relations and minimize possible disputes. In fact, in case of any dispute, groups solve the issue through dialogue while they share livelihood activities. In other words, livelihood makes people more conscious about the need to keep away from disputes, which helps them promote social harmony in their communities.[55] In addition, livelihood programmes help communities to prevent, mitigate or resolve emerging conflicts, and accelerate post-conflict social reintegration.[56] This is effective through the alternatives seen in livelihood activities, which equip communities with the capacities for self-help and resistance to negative influences from either inside or outside the groups.

Some prerequisites have been stated for livelihood programmes to promote peace and reconciliation, including the awareness of forms of trust and cooperation broken by conflict, so that communities know exactly what it would take to be together again. Indeed, the knowledge of social links broken and how they were torn apart serves as the foundation of the new pragmatic social networks to be created by the livelihood activities. Moreover, the livelihood efforts should be made "at a pace and on a scale that is manageable."[57] This means that actions should not either be too fast or too much at once, rather, they should wait for the parties previously in conflict to show their

[51] Koster, "Fragmented Lives," 99.

[52] Koster, "Fragmented Lives."

[53] Koster, "Fragmented Lives," 105.

[54] Kvitashvili, Livelihoods & Conflict, 8.

[55] Lokendra Poudyal, Bal Krishna Upadhyay, and Laxmi Karki, *Final Report on the Mid-Term Evaluation of Livelihood Recovery for Peace (LRP/UNDP) Project* (Kathmandu, 2013).

[56] Kvitashvili, *Livelihoods & Conflict*.

[57] Kvitashvili, *Livelihoods & Conflict,* 12.

readiness for collaboration. In other words, there is no way of pushing or forcing, but rather, handling things step by step at the speed of the parties concerned.

METHODOLOGY

This part presents information on the study paradigm, design and approach. It also explains the methods and tools used to collect and analyze data. It further provides details on the study site and the organization that initiated Rukara Reconciliation Village.

Design approach and methods

The present research is informed by the constructivism paradigm. The latter is committed to the view that "people construct their own understanding and knowledge of the world through experiencing things and reflecting on those experiences."[58] In fact, in the context of this study, peace and reconciliation are understood from the experiences of the participants, using different data collected by the researcher from the natural setting of the community. The combination of the researcher's and participants' experiences helps in the construction of the meanings through the evaluation of participants' information, supported by evidence-based and real-life facts showcasing the true state of peace and reconciliation among the village members. The inductive analysis of data elicits an understanding of how the village members construct their individual and social influences,[59] which portrays the state of peace and reconciliation in the area where they live.

The study adopted the case study design, which involves an in-depth analysis of a small group of individuals or an organization in its real-life context.[60] The case study research aims to provide information by capturing a variety of variables in order to classify the complexity of a set of conditions that come together to produce a particular phenomenon, situation or event, and it is considered as best suitable to study a social unit.[61] In this regard, the experience of Rukara Reconciliation Village was considered in its different facets.

In terms of approach, the study used the qualitative approach to enable in-depth analysis of the experiences of Rukara Reconciliation Village residents. This approach allowed the researcher to gain a rich and deeper understanding of the current state of peace and reconciliation from the perspectives of the village members involved in the study. According to Creswell, qualitative research is best suited to address a research problem that requires learning more from participants through exploration.[62] For this, the research relies more on the views of participants and less on the direction identified in the literature by the researcher. Contrary to top-down approaches which seek to confirm or disconfirm hypotheses, the qualitative approach is deeply inductive, which helps the researcher make meaning from the data, develop themes and findings, identify representative data to support findings, and explain the findings using theory and literature.[63]

The study population was composed of members of Rukara Reconciliation Village, the leadership of the organization PeacEdu Initiative Rwanda, and stakeholders including donors and sponsors. These participants were selected particularly because they are closely linked with the village and have full experience of its daily activities. There were also key informants comprising members of Mbyo Reconciliation Village and staff of Prison Fellowship Rwanda, an organization that established a number of reconciliation villages in other parts of the country. Last, academic publications, research reports, successful stories recorded about the role of livelihood programmes in fostering reconciliation and peacebuilding were examined. The sample was purposively and conveniently selected, where participants were

[58] Dickson Adom, Akwasi Yeboah, and Attah Kusi Ankrah, "Constructivism Philosophical Paradigm: Implication for Research, Teaching and Learning," Global Journal of Arts Humanities and Social Sciences 4, no.10 (2016): 2.

[59] Judith R. Boyland, "A Social Constructivist Approach to the Gathering of Empirical Data," *Australian Counselling Research Journal* (2019): 30–34.

[60] Arya Priya, "Case Study Methodology of Qualitative Research: Key Attributes and Navigating the Conundrums in Its Application," *Sociological Bulletin* 70, no.1 (2021): 95.

[61] Robert K. Yin, "Case Study Research: Design and Methods," *Canadian Journal of Action Research* 14, no. 1 (2009): 69–71.

[62] John W. Creswell, *Educational Research: Planning, Conducting, and Evaluating Quantitative and Qualitative Research*, 4th ed. (New York: Pearson, 2012).

[63] Patricia Witkowsky and Andrea Bingham, "Deductive and Inductive Approaches to Qualitative Data Analysis," in *Analyzing and Interpreting Qualitative Data:* After the Interview, eds. C. Vanover, P. Mihas, and J. Saldaña (2022): 3.

deliberately chosen because of the important information they can authoritatively provide. The selected participants were available, willing to participate, and able to communicate experiences and opinions in an articulate, expressive, and reflective manner.[64] Convenience sampling was also used to enable the researcher to utilize a sample which was readily available and accessible[65] in the location of the village.

Data collection was done using six focus group discussions (FGDs), of which four were conducted with members of Rukara Reconciliation Village, one with youth members of the youth clubs affiliated to PeacEdu Initiative Rwanda and living in the village, and another one with members of Mbyo Reconciliation Village located in Bugesera District. The FGDs aimed to explore participants' knowledge and experiences and to examine not only what they think but also how they think and why they think that way.[66] Participants were exposed to open-ended questions, and the discussion took place in a flexible setting. One group numbered eight mixed participants, bringing together both males and females, genocide survivors and former perpetrators.

In addition to FGDs, a total of five semi-structured individual interviews were conducted, with the executive director and founder, the programmes manager, and the community mobilizer of PeacEdu Initiative Rwanda, a representative of a donor organization, and one representative of an organization that runs other reconciliation villages in the country. The third data collection instrument consisted of study site observations, where six visits were made to households to validate the personal stories narrated by village residents. In agreement with Cohen et al., observation offers the investigator the opportunity to gather "live" data from naturally occurring social situations. In this way, the researcher "can look directly at what is taking place in situ rather than relying on second-hand accounts."[67] While some of the personal case stories were presented verbatim, others were synchronized to identify the common patterns of change.

Prior to going to the field, the researcher obtained a recommendation letter from the Aegis Trust as the commissioning entity, approval from PeacEdu Initiative Rwanda, and authorization from Rukara Sector authorities, where the study was conducted. The researcher further abided by the protocols for participants' consent and agreement, data protection, anonymity and confidentiality.[68] Focus group discussions were audio recorded to ensure that each single detail was captured. Their transcription was done at the completion of all the group sessions. Semi-script shorthand notes were also used, where ellipses, abbreviations and self-developed symbols for frequently-used phrases allowed the researcher to capture participants' ideas. The brief notes were immediately deciphered and transcribed into longhand at the end of a session, before starting another. The technique eased and speeded up handwriting and enabled the researcher to capture as much information as possible during observations, interviews and focus group discussions. The data collected in Kinyarwanda were translated into English, with attention to the context and recognition of the source text. The researcher-as-translator gave a higher priority to respecting the source culture rather than providing fluent target text and making sense for the audience.[69]

Data analysis was done using both narrative analysis and thematic analysis. On the one hand, data were configured to render explanation, give meaning to the participants' experiences, and offer insight into the motivation and purpose behind the narratives.[70] The researcher considered not only the content but also the structure and the context in which the narratives were produced. On the other hand, the data sets were taken through the process of identification, analysis and interpretation of themes.[71] For this, data was grouped into units

[64] Lawrence A. Palinkas, Sarah M. Horwitz, Carla A. Green, Jennifer P. Wisdom, Naihua Duan, and Kimberly Hoagwood, "Purposeful Sampling for Qualitative Data Collection and Analysis in Mixed Method Implementation Research," *Administration and Policy in Mental Health and Mental Health Services Research* 42, no. 5 (2015): 2.

[65] Shagofah Noor, Omid Tajik, and Jawad Golzar, "Sampling Method | Descriptive Research. Convenience Sampling," IJELS 1, no. 2 (2022): 72–77.

[66] Jenny Kitzinger, "Qualitative Research: Introducing Focus Groups," *BMJ* 311 (1995): 299.

[67] Louis Cohen, Lawrence Manion, and Keith Morrison, *Research Methods in Education* (London: Routledge, 2011): 397.

[68] JHadjer Mirza, Fouzi Bellalem, and Chahrazed Mirza, "Ethical Considerations in Qualitative Research: Summary Guidelines for Novice Social Science Researchers," *Social Studies and Research Journal* 11, no. 01 (2023): 441–449.

[69] Uswatun Qoyyimah, "Handling Translations of Data for Qualitative Research," *Forum for Linguistic Studies* 5, no.1 (2023): 4.

[70] Oliver L. Kimberly, "A Journey into Narrative Analysis: A Methodology for Discovering Meanings," *Journal of Teaching in Physical Education*, 17 (1998): 244–259.

[71] Prokopis A. Christou, "How to Use Thematic Analysis in Qualitative Research," *Journal of Qualitative Research in Tourism* (2023): 3.

of analysis, categories, themes and patterns, which were consistently coded and assessed. The themes that emerged were discussed in the light of evidence and examples from the field, for the final research report.

For privacy and confidentiality purposes, names of the participants were concealed. Upon agreement with the persons concerned, initials were used for the readability of responses. Some names were recorded in the research report after authorization and consent by the participants. Nonetheless, these best practices did not affect the originality and clarity of data or their analysis and interpretation.

In a nutshell, in this study, the case study design fits well the constructivism paradigm, where the researcher reached out to the participants in their natural context and captured their constructions of peace and reconciliation as lived in their community. Data collection instruments such as interview, observation, and focus group discussion were used to generate relevant data from the participants. Data analysis was then done inductively from specifics to generalizations, which brought about the research report.

Past and present of Rukara study site

In order to realize the level of the results of reconciliation efforts made in Rukara Reconciliation Village, it is important to have a glance at its history in terms of livelihoods, conflicts, and recovery.

Rukara Sector is located in Kayonza District in the Eastern Province. The population density is 630/km² and the poverty rate is 35.6%, while the extreme poverty rate is 8.5%. The population is mostly rural, at 81.4%, and the portion living in an urban setting is 18.6%. As for age groups, 39.5% of its population is less than 14 years old, 55.8% is aged between 15 and 64 years, while 4.9% of the population is 64 or more years old.[72] As in other parts of Kayonza District, Rukara people earn their daily living through agriculture, and participation in the production of the main crops is dominated by banana, maize, beans, sorghum and rice, to mention some of them. As far as livestock is concerned, 63% of all households own some type of livestock.73

The history of the Rwandan conflict in general and the genocide against the Tutsi in particular in Rukara has similarities with other areas of the Eastern Province and Rwanda at large, but with some particularities. Testimonies from resident genocide survivors and former perpetrators show that infringement of human rights, exclusion and persecution against the Tutsi started well before 1994, and it affected different areas of life, such as economic development, employment, education, and freedom of expression. This infringement forced some victims to almost renounce their citizen rights, such as the right to education and employment.

Testimonies reveal that some parents discouraged their children from going to primary school, since they could not upgrade to secondary school even when they would have passed the national examination. Informants also denounce favouritism in favour of the former Hutu population, based on their ethnic belonging or origin. An anecdote was shared, where, in the national examination, two Tutsi primary school students were obliged to show exam responses to their Hutu mate who was academically weak. Given his positionality, the Hutu candidate passed the exam, while the two Tutsi learners unfairly failed. Dehumanizing acts were also stated as evidence of conflict in the area, where, for instance, some Tutsi were denied their right to purchase commodities from local shops, with the pretext that that the commodity was out of stock. In some cases, shop owners could clearly state that they would not offer it even though the undesirable buyer had money to pay. For instance, one informant in a focus group discussion revealed that he and his son were denied a bottle of banana wine at a local pub on the sole basis that they were Tutsi, even though they had money to meet the cost. Furthermore, close to the early period of genocide, Tutsi were excluded from local meetings and community activities, on the ground that they were not bona fide Rwandans or served the interests of the so-called “enemy of the country,” referring to the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF).

After the outbreak of genocide in early April 1994, many Tutsi from different places surrounding Rukara fled to Rukara Catholic Parish. Like in other places, victims thought they would survive because they were convinced that nobody would dare commit a crime in a holy place. As was the case in nearby churches like Gahini Anglican Church,

[71] National Institute of Statistics of Rwanda (NISR), The Fifth Rwanda Population and Housing Census, District Profile: Kayonza (Kigali: NISR, 2023).

[72] Kayonza District, Kayonza District Development Strategy (DDS) 2017-2024 (Kayonza, 2019).

Tutsi who had sought refuge in Rukara Catholic Parish premises were attacked by Interahamwe militia and some local Hutu residents on the 13th of April 1994. Many Tutsi were killed, but some of them tried to defend themselves using traditional weapons such as sticks and stones. Through these meagre means, Tutsi managed to defy the Interahamwe and local attackers. Later on, the massacres were intensified with the support of local authorities, armed forces and gendarmes as well as other Interahamwe militia from Murambi. All these forces joined the local killers and were able to exterminate a huge number of Tutsi who had fled to Rukara Parish premises. Tutsi who survived fled into the bush. Some days later, the RPF Inkotanyi soldiers took control of the area and were able to rescue some Tutsi who had survived the attacks. A number of perpetrators fled to other regions and outside the country, and most of them went to Tanzania. Some perpetrators revealed that they ran away from their homeland because they were afraid of the new administrative regime that would take revenge against them. Others testified that they felt guilty and would not be able to live with the genocide survivors, who had endured severe atrocities perpetrated by their neighbours. An informant in the focus group testified that, in his view, the only option at his disposal was to flee far away from the survivors, whose deceased parents had for so long treated him as one of their family members.

After the Rwanda Patriotic Army (RPA) had stopped the genocide, both survivors and perpetrators residing in Rukara found themselves in a situation where they needed to meet a lot of needs and several obligations. For instance, they needed shelter, food and security. Upon return to their respective homes, the survival of both genocide survivors and perpetrators depended on mutual support and they had no choice, as stated by one survivor in the following terms: “We left the camp and arrived at our places but we didn’t find any houses. The government told us to go to the houses of neighbours who fled to Tanzania. We entered the houses, we lived in them and we ate food collected from here and there, we cut bananas from whatever plantation.” Indeed, the genocide survivors had their property destroyed, cattle and crops looted to the extent that they had nothing left. They had to start a new life, taking stock of the existing resources, that is, those belonging to perpetrators.

Later on, when the real owners of the property (temporarily occupied by the genocide survivors) returned from exile, the problem of ownership of houses and crops was raised. As a general rule, survivors had to give back to their neighbours their houses and property. Nevertheless, two scenarios were raised: on the one hand, survivors were requested to cede the houses to their owners. As one focus group member puts it: “When they returned back home, we were required to give them their houses, and we went to live in temporary shelters made of tents (burende). We had no other choice.” Then the onus was on the government, which had the task to cater for all the homeless people. The situation complicated the survivors’ life further and worsened their woundedness. On the other hand, some owners of the houses and property, conscious of the critical situation which the genocide survivors were in and considering damages they had caused during the genocide, accepted to share their houses by accommodating survivors while waiting for a better solution. Although those who went this route are few, their gesture had a big impact on the re-establishment of a healthy relationship among Rukara residents.

On the side of perpetrators, they had many difficulties in restoring their life after years of imprisonment and abandonment of their homes and property. One of them testified: “After the genocide, returning to normal life was difficult for me because I was imprisoned and when released, it was difficult for me, but I had kept trying until now. Despite the fact that I was imprisoned, I am trying to live, and I feel that the future will be better because I live with fellow Rwandans.” Facing such difficulties, genocide perpetrators took two divergent pathways. Some perpetrators decided to open up to the survivors, as one of them testified: “When I got out of prison, I was lucky enough to be welcomed by one of the survivors, because I had nowhere to live. They gave me a hoe to use in farming; others gave me food. I gradually become integrated and dared to talk to them.” In this orientation, other perpetrators undertook the pathway of apologizing and they were forgiven, which was the source of restoring healthy relationships. On this note, consider the following informant’s words: “After release, I apologized. After apologizing to them, they approached me and I approached them. One gave me a plate, another a cup, and others sweet potato plantlets. They helped us because my husband and I were imprisoned and we had nothing when we were released. Our life started from zero.”

On the other side, some perpetrators remained intransigent and preferred to struggle alone with their life, not willing to open up to genocide

survivors. They still considered the survivors as enemies and insisted that they "would never enter the enemy's camp." Later on, a portion of this category changed their minds, while others did not.

Nevertheless, Rukara residents had come to realize that their survival is conditioned by their living together. During focus group discussions, one member expressed his inner feeling that: "Sincerely speaking, we are all Rwandans. Who will inherit our country if we continue killing one another?" This serves as evidence that Rukara residents feel like one people, and they were increasingly convinced that life becomes almost impossible in the absence of quality relationships. Moreover, the statement answers the question of who to live with and how to do it. Community members revealed that, in order to respond to the question, they decided to abandon the old cloth and put on a new one that fits their new life after genocide atrocities. One testimony stated, "In prisons, I was wondering like if am released, where would I live, whom would I talk to, who would I live with? But in fact, we are open, we are close to each other, we apologized and were forgiven without any obstacles. Now we share everything, we help one another; there is no problem."

Quality relationships were restored, thanks to government efforts supported by good teachings from churches and non-governmental organizations. All of them played an important role. One of the most important contributions of the government was fostering equity and equality in order for the citizens to rebuild the country. One group member stated, "I have seen that the government cares about every Rwandan and even reached the point where it cares for both sides [survivors and perpetrators], because they all have to rebuild the country that was destroyed from all sides." The contribution of civil society organizations (CSOs) was also seen as important, especially because they all "came and talked about unity and reconciliation of Rwandans," which allowed people to build peace, and, by implication their country.

Socio-demographic overview of Rukara Reconciliation Village

Rukara Reconciliation Village is located in Rukara Sector and covers three administrative cells, namely, Rukara, Rwimishinya and Kawangire, with 16 administrative villages: Karambo, Butimba, Kinunga I, Kinunga II, Nyagaharabuge, Muzizi, Mimuli, Karubamba, Mitungo, Ibiza, Kabuga, Buyonza, Gitega, Ikishaba, Karagari I and Karagari II. The village has 250 households with 1,750 community members, of which 30% are men and 70% are women.[74] Their age groups range from 35 years to 70 years, which suggests that all of them were born before the genocide against the Tutsi. The living conditions of the beneficiaries are the same as for other populations of the area. In fact, agriculture constitutes the main source of income for the families, and they all practise subsistence agriculture, on less than 1-hectare pieces of land, in most cases. This has implications for the beneficiaries' standard of living, which generally is low. Such a standard of living justifies the need for socio-economic support.

Members joined the Rukara Reconciliation Village at different periods and through various ways. The first beneficiaries were called upon by the founder of PeacEdu Initiative Rwanda, after noticing their critical life condition. One of them stated, "He called upon widow survivors and gave us goats, thereafter, having realized that goats were not enough, he started the construction of kitchen gardens." To reach a larger number of women, the founder of the organization deployed some volunteers to look for more widows from the villages, as testified by one informant during the focus group discussion: "He sent me to bring only three widows, and I did. Upon arrival, they were gathered, had some healing sessions, and were requested to have the courage to live in harmony with their neighbours, including those who had persecuted them during the genocide." Even though it was not easy, the widow survivors finally resolved to forgive the former perpetrators.

Other members joined the reconciliation village through "one-to-one recruitment" done by individuals, household to household, or groups of those who were already members or potential new members. Their invitation message was composed of a record of the benefits already achieved, and a request to be part of them. On this note, a newly recruited member stated, "I knew this project through my neighbour who had joined it before. I asked her many questions, and later I accepted to join it." Another member said, "They came to my house, had a long conversation with me, told me about its benefits, and I felt they were carrying out outstanding actions and then decided to join." In addition to this, a former perpetrator revealed that the organization looked for them by all means. In fact, "They came to me. One of them is [K]; they were like four. They explained to me and I exposed to them all my worries. They added that the organization was looking for people who had

[74] PeacEdu Initiative Rwanda, *Annual Report* 2023 (Kayonza, 2024).

pleaded guilty, and I felt relieved and joined them [Numvise nduhutse maze nemera kujyana nabo]."

The third category of members joined the reconciliation village after hearing about its success stories and witnessing activities done and positive changes. A testimony like: "I heard from my closer neighbour telling me that they constructed a kitchen garden, gave him a goat, and were carrying out benevolent actions for the needy old widows," contributed to spreading a good image of the organization to non-members of the village. Moreover, during discussion with a group of youth, most of them confirmed that their membership of the organization was greatly motivated by tangible actions performed in their community and schools. Statements like: "One day, I saw people renovating a nearby house that had been almost destroyed, and I heard they were from that organization" and "My mates were given school bags, notebooks and pens, and I knew some of them were in great need of this equipment; I therefore felt I would also join," were recurrent from the participants during focus group discussions.

For many, if not all of them, joining the reconciliation village was a long and troublesome journey. For the genocide survivors, on the one hand, they still had fear and mistrut of their neighbours who had persecuted them and killed their family members. Meeting with their former persecutors was a nightmare and they preferred to be cautious. Members stated one by one, "We couldn't dare to face one another" or "We entered their house step by step, with hesitation, afraid of everything, and we would not like others to know that we were there, and some of us totally abstained from entering perpetrators' premises." On the other hand, former perpetrators were so embarrassed to meet their former victims, as illustrated by this statement made by one focus group discussion member: "Upon release from prison, I was embarrassed to meet a survivor and I could not greet any of them, since I felt ashamed. I felt I should run far away to avoid any opportunity to meet with the genocide survivors." Moreover, there was pressure from counterpart perpetrators who had not acknowledged their role in the genocide and subsequently refrained from making a step forward to apologize to genocide victims. They were so biased that they accused their former mates of treason. During focus group discussions, members revealed the outrage inflicted on them in denigrating terms such as, "You have betrayed us. May God care for you. You are no longer part of us." Regardless of the above, members of the reconciliation village persevered, since they were convinced that they would achieve more benefits than breakdowns.

About PeacEdu Initiative Rwanda

PeacEdu Initiative Rwanda is a non-governmental organization founded in 2019, officially registered with the Rwanda Governance Board (RGB). It is engaged and dedicated to prevent genocide and mass atrocities through education about and promotion of human rights. The organization strives to build a resilient community through socio-economic development, reconciliation, peacebuilding, human rights, and youth empowerment. To this effect, it advocates for social cohesion and aims at fostering solidarity through storytelling and imparting critical thinking skills among community members, all of which is meant to build a unified society, pave the way for healing and promote well-being for both present and future generations.

The organization works with a community of genocide survivors and former perpetrators who confessed their role during the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi, teachers, and young students in different clubs affiliated to the organization. Its activities include peacebuilding and reconciliation programmes through (i) empowering the community with non-violent means of resolving conflict, building trust and promoting trauma healing and genocide prevention; (ii) youth empowerment through working with affiliated in and out-of-school youth-led clubs; (iii) equipping young people with critical thinking, empathy and personal responsibility to reject violence; and (iv) social economic development, whereby the organization believes that the community members must improve their socio-economic conditions so as to achieve their resilience.

The idea to create the organization partly originates from peace education training sessions received by the Founder, Mr Albert Rutikanga. In his testimony, he stated: "I was trained by Aegis Trust on peace and values, and I came back to my community to make a positive change." The training sessions referred to here were organized in the framework of the Rwanda Peace Education Programme (RPEP), a three-year collaborative effort between four local and international partners working to build sustainable peace in Rwanda and around the world. These partners are: the Aegis Trust, the Institute of Research and Dialogue for Peace (IRDP), Radio La Benevolencija (RLB) and the USC Shoah Foundation – the Institute for Visual History and Education, which ran from July 2013 until June 2016.

The project aimed to promote social cohesion and instill a number of values such as pluralism and personal responsibility, empathy, critical thinking and dispositions to build a more peaceful society. The onsite education, one of its main components, comprised of Kigali-based education programmes at the Kigali Genocide Memorial, which provided students and teachers with peace education workshops. The training sessions empowered people from different parts of the country with skills in leadership, advocacy and peacebuilding to help them initiate their own peacebuilding projects and contribute to conflict resolution once back in their respective communities. The skills acquired enabled them to become part of a network of dynamic people capable of promoting and leading peace initiatives. Indeed, the RPEP capacity building sessions inspired the trainees, who, on their side, contributed to change in their respective communities. In this regard, Rutikanga narrated his experience in the following terms: "Before joining the training, it was not easy for me to forgive those people who killed my family. The training helped me overcome the wounds caused by the genocide. It was not easy. It took time to make the journey of reconciliation, but it happened." As an agent for change, he was able to ignite community-based reconciliation initiatives in Rukara Reconciliation Village, as he had once dreamed. According to the founder of PeacEdu Initiative Rwanda, it is worth reiterating that "The change we need to see happening in our communities has to start from ourselves. We are active agents and responsible for peacebuilding in our society."

FINDINGS

This part presents informants' perceptions about the extent to which livelihood recovery has contributed to peace and reconciliation efforts in Rukara Reconciliation Village. Some sections of this part give details about livelihood capacities demonstrated by the village members in response to individual and collective stresses. Other sections examine the extent to which these capacities affect community members in various dimensions, such as living together and well-being, healing history-related wounds, instilling values and a sense of productive citizenship, promoting reconciliation and resilience, commitment to sustainable peace, fostering forgiveness, and providing a space for education. The part concludes by examining the sustainability of the model, and it interrogates conditions for the potential transferability and scalability of the reconciliation paradigm adopted in the village to other places within and outside Rwanda.

Identified livelihood capacities

The identified livelihood capacities put in place by PeacEdu Initiative Rwanda in Rukara Reconciliation Village are diverse. First, they comprise the construction of kitchen gardens (akarima k'igikoni) for a family's protection against malnutrition and related diseases. This capacity is supported by a free health insurance scheme known as Community-Based Health Insurance (mutuelle de santé) for village residents. Second, these capacities include the provision of livestock, the creation of savings and loan groups, the construction and renovation of houses, and equipping students with scholastic materials. When the beneficiaries rank the activities in terms of importance, they always state the kitchen garden as the first, followed by the construction or renovation of their houses, supply of livestock, then savings and loan groups (ibimina), and last, health insurance, as members of group discussions stated in the local language: "Baduhaye uturima tw'igikoni, baratwubakira, baduha ihene, badushingira ibimina, dutangirwa mituweli [They gave us kitchen gardens, constructed our houses, gave us goats, paid for our health insurance]." Members of youth clubs added that the students are provided with school materials at the beginning of the academic year and sometimes in the middle of the year. Group members confirmed that they are provided with school materials including school bags, notebooks, pens, and geometric materials.

From the year 2000 onward, some houses earlier constructed for genocide survivors in 1997 were in critical condition to the extent that they needed renovation. PeacEdu Initiative Rwanda embarked on this activity as a matter of urgency in the area where it has been operating. By 2023, a total of two houses had been constructed and six houses had been renovated for families of the survivors or former perpetrators. Testimonies from beneficiaries during group discussions stated that, "In particular, the organization built or renovated houses for old widows without any other family member, and for needy people released from prison [Abakecuru b'incike n'abafunguwe batifashije]." The families currently feel comfortable in their decent houses, thanks to their membership of the reconciliation village.

Activities conducted on the land such as the construction of kitchen gardens and the raising of livestock are counted as beneficiaries' personal property that yield agricultural production. In rural areas, farming activities depend on livestock as the source of manure, and both of them are the most important determinants of food security. Moreover, livestock constitutes a source of financial income through selling animals and milk. Members of the reconciliation village expressed their positive feelings about the provision of kitchen gardens and livestock. One of them stated: "They gave us goats, and, having realized that this support is not enough, the organization also constructed for us kitchen gardens and planted for me very good vegetables. The organization assisted both genocide survivors and former perpetrators in Rukara, and this was done in the context of unity and reconciliation."

Improving the health conditions of individuals and groups is another category of livelihood activity benefitting members of Rukara Reconciliation Village. Each year since 2019, PeacEdu Initiative Rwanda has paid for 300 to 500 Community-Based Health Insurance subscriptions (CBHI) for members of the community, and this number keeps increasing. According to the Ministry of Health (2016), the national CBHI scheme, known as Mutuelle de santé, despite its dependence on the government and donors for subsidies, has greatly increased access to health care and contributed to much-improved health results. During focus group discussions, beneficiaries revealed that, "Health insurance is always paid in June of each year" for all family members of the beneficiary households. They also expressed their satisfaction with the activity performed by the organization for their benefit. One of the group members appreciated the role of mutuelle de santé in protecting their health through statements such as, "They pay mutuelle de santé for us, and this is evidence that they wish us to be healthy [Aba akwifuriza ubuzima bwiza]."

Increasing the financial capital of the community members is another category of livelihood capacities in Rukara Reconciliation Village. It is concerned with the monetary assets to provide goods and services. In fact, the organization has created four savings and loan groups, namely, Abakunda amahoro Muzizi, Abadahigwa, Abahuje ubumwe Muzizi and Twiyubake Muhenze to boost income generating activities among different group members. These people are mobilized into groups of 20–30 that save an agreed amount of money. The individual share capital varies from FRW 1,000 to FRW 4,000, and the total savings are worth about FRW 1,500,000. Beneficiaries stated that they gather a small amount of money on a weekly basis, and, after a certain time, everybody in need may borrow from it at an agreed low interest. One member revealed that she borrowed from her savings and loan group some money that helped her to repair the roof of her house that was damaged by the hurricane. She was also planning to request a top-up to consolidate the walls of the house. In general, savings and loan groups support people who do not have access to financial services, especially because of their lack of collateral or lower skills to manage projects and loans from financial institutions.

Under the social capital category, the livelihood capacities bring solutions for existing problems through membership of the community. During group discussions, members explained that, during the construction of kitchen gardens, they combine efforts and carry out different parts of the activity where "some bring the mud, others bring pieces of wood, and still others put in order the materials to construct the garden, until completion." The construction of the kitchen garden would be difficult or even impossible if it was done by one person. Moreover, when members of a savings and loan group meet, they not only give and record the money cashed in or cashed out, but also have the opportunity to edify one another to the extent that "one who came with problems will go back home happy after finding solutions to the problems." Their social cohesion is further consolidated through dialogue enabled by the livelihood activity carried out together as a team.

The livelihood capacities definitely empower individuals and groups in the community. The organization helps beneficiaries increase the means of securing the necessities of life, so as to enhance their resilience, and improve their overall well-being for themselves and for future generations. Being performed by the village members as a team, the outcome becomes more significant than if performed by an individual, which was confirmed by members in group discussion: "Efforts made by many people rather than an individual, when coordinated, supersede individual efforts and bring about power and capacity to do great things." A participant in the group discussion testified how she was invited to be a member of the organization through showing her that she would be assisted with different needs of life. An invitation was extended to her in the following terms: "Just see, you have four children, no father, no mother, and no family relatives to help you raise the kids, while if you join our place [our organization], you

will feel relieved of some burdens, they will pay for you health insurance [mutuelle], they give us livestock such as goats, to the extent that, even if they don't pay for you, next time, you will be able to do it by yourself."

In addition to socio-economic assistance, the organization intervenes in resolving conflict, building trust, and promoting trauma healing and genocide prevention activities as part of helping beneficiaries overcome emotional and psychological vulnerabilities from the genocide. A genocide survivor testified how she came out of solitude without any surviving family relative: "This new family liberated me from solitude, and when I have any problem, I talk to [K], or I feel that I may talk to this old man."

Enhancing societal belonging

Members of the reconciliation village have been able to define, share, develop and sustain healthy and meaningful relationships with one another through the livelihood activities carried out together as a team. In addition, non-discriminatory participation in all the activities makes everyone feel valued as a member of the village and connected to a wider community. Individual testimonies revealed this societal belonging: "We always do everything as a family. When they give goats, we are all present, we construct kitchen gardens together, the health insurance is paid for everyone at the same time; we feel like a family." Moreover, working together transforms the way people consider and relate to one another as per the statement: "I can see that these [livelihood] activities have united people. For example, when we went to Nyabigega, both genocide survivors and former perpetrators entered the survivor's house. We took pieces of wood and sisal leaves, brought garden soil and constructed for her a good and big kitchen garden. At the completion of the work, she brought cooked bananas and some milk, and she invited us to eat. We had a short time of hesitation, and then we entered the house and ate the food with excitement. Some non-members were looking at us through the windows, and on our way back home, they wanted to talk to us about the exciting experience they had witnessed from the exceptional activity we had accomplished on that hill."

Putting common interests above private ones

The village members have also developed a sense of putting common interests above individual ones, and this strengthens their connection within the group and extends outside of the group members. In group discussions, members expressed that they do not keep for themselves the yield from agricultural activities, but rather, share with neighbours: "I always tell my neighbours to come and take for free vegetables for their children, and they do, which contributes to fighting against child malnutrition, and I take this opportunity to explain to them the benefits of the kitchen garden, and I can see they are excited." A similar statement was made by another member: "I can tell you that the whole village comes and collects vegetables from our homes [kitchen gardens]; we do not keep them for ourselves. The same for the livestock: goats have reproduced and some of us give doelings or bucklings to their neighbours, and so the family gets extended." In general, members of the reconciliation village expressed a feeling of sharing, either among themselves or with the larger community.

The outcomes of the livelihood activities benefit not only the village members, but also the community outside of the coverage of the organization, thus promoting a sense of empathy and social responsibility. During group discussions, female respondents revealed that they extend the example of sharing vegetables cultivated in the household kitchen gardens: "When vegetables are ready for harvest, we always take special care of them so that anybody coming with a need for vegetables may get some from me for her children. We feel that we have got a treasure not to keep for ourselves, but to share with others." Another evidence of values was given by members of the youth club, who stated that, having benefitted by school materials given to them by PeacEdu Initiative Rwanda, they felt they should assist their mates who are in need but deprived of the chance to get assistance from the organization.

Mediating healing and inner peace

Community members of Rukara Reconciliation Village acknowledged the existence of different wounds among themselves. In addition, they stated that living and working together as a family has been an important healing strategy. One genocide survivor expressed her feelings

when she saw neighbours coming to her house to construct the kitchen garden: "I felt that I still have a family. As I no longer have enough physical strength to do heavy work, men and women of different ages came and assisted me. They are still doing it. When I am sick, I see people like [K] coming to me. They also do it for others; may God bless them." The activity to construct the kitchen garden matters, but its significance in terms of solidarity and empathy towards vulnerable people matters much more. Another group member considered the livelihood activities as bringing inner peace among the community members, with the statement: "Activities that we carry out together have brought to us inner peace [Amahoro yo mu mitima yacu twese]. I no longer have fear of any person in this community. When I walk around, I feel safe and secure. We appreciate so much the progress made."

A striking instance evidencing the results of healing from the wounds through livelihood activities is vividly noticeable in "the change in the history of a machete." During the genocide, the machete was one of the most used weapons to kill the Tutsi. After the genocide, seeing a machete was traumatising to the extent that some local authorities prohibited carrying it in public. However, it has remained a tool commonly used in different household activities such as construction, agriculture, and cleaning. The community members have been using the machete in their daily activities, as one respondent stated, "for instance in constructing or renovating a house or constructing a kitchen garden, and we all know the horrible history of the machete in this country. However, you can see that one uses a machete to cut off a tree, hands it to another to use it, and so on, and we share it to build and edify one another, whereas it was used in killing people and destroying the country." Therefore, using a machete all together evidences that they no longer consider it as "a machine to kill" but rather, a tool to be used for the common good of people.

Acquiring different values through role modelling

In addition to benefitting from the material outcomes of the livelihood activities, community members agreed that they promote different values, as stated by one respondent: "When we come together in these activities, being construction of houses or kitchen gardens, or savings and loan groups, we nurture our unity, cohesion and solidarity. Besides, the savings and loan groups transform us into models in the community, where our neighbours envy our well-being." Moreover, the activities seem to impose a certain guard rail or code of conduct on the village members, who always feel that they should behave in a manner that does not contradict their core values. On this note, a respondent stated: "When I go back home at the completion of any activity organized by the organization, I am aware that neighbours have seen me going there, and I cannot quarrel at home or get into trouble with anybody else. Even if I go to the local pub for a glass of beer, I watch myself, so as to never contradict the message conveyed through our activities."

Members of youth clubs testified that they were greatly inspired by the collaboration and caring for one another observed during the village members' livelihood activities. Some of them stated that they joined the clubs because of outstanding acts and behaviours they had witnessed from the village members. A participant in group discussions commented: "When PeacEdu delegates came to our school, I immediately remembered the day I saw men and women repairing a house of a neighbouring family. I decided to join the club so that I would have an opportunity to imitate what they did for the neighbour." Thus, young people consider their elders in the village as role models.

Nurturing collaboration and healthy relationships

The village members described the positive mood that prevails among them during the livelihood activities, especially those which require them to be together for a joint effort action. Their joint work is always characterized by core values such as enthusiasm, team work, caring for one another and a strong sense of responsibility. A respondent narrated, "When some are constructing, others bring them garden soil, others cut off sisal leaves, others sharpen pieces of wood, and all the groups are in the same compound." Furthermore, these activities give them an opportunity to apologize or forgive, talk about confidential matters or address any issue that would have been raised between two members. Respondents in a group discussion revealed, "When we are working, for example, there might be fellows who have an issue with one another; they prefer to address it while being together instead of one taking the time to go to his or her fellow's house. We take the spots of livelihood activities as spaces for nurturing social relations."

PeacEdu Initiative Rwanda has, among its programmes, youth empowerment, where it works with youth in 10 affiliated clubs from different in-school and out-of-school settings. These young women and men in clubs are equipped with critical thinking, empathy, human rights education and awareness of personal responsibility to reject violence. They are also encouraged to use their talents like music, drama, dance, games and writing to spread the message of peace and be a beacon of hope to their fellows. They are further linked with adults through intergenerational storytelling to forge youth who stand for peace and become a seed for positive change in their surroundings. The clubs have made a space for friendship and leisure at school. In addition to receiving peace related teachings and material support from the PeacEdu Initiative, their gatherings serve the purpose of making new friends and relaxing from tense periods of study. Participants compared the mood prevailing in their participation in the youth club activities to the one experienced by a football team while playing, or a cultural dance club when performing. Moreover, meeting and interacting outside their lessons and academic activities constitutes an opportunity to explore outside realities, especially for students in boarding schools.

Rediscovering self-worth and dignity

The study found that the livelihood capacities such as the construction and renovation of houses made people, especially the genocide survivors, feel re-valued and respected in the community. One respondent expressed her feelings by saying, “My family had a good house, but it was totally destroyed during the genocide. The house where I stayed after the genocide was about to fall down, and I had no means to repair it. When [A] informed me that they would repair my house, I felt like I was dreaming. One day, I saw all the men coming with pieces of trees and other materials. They repaired the house and you can see it is comfortable enough. I am proud of it, proud of the organization, proud of my fellow members; they did a great job!” She further added, “I feel secure and happy; they have changed my life. I used to worry about it. I thought it would fall on me, when it rained I was in trouble; but now everything is all right.”

Individually, former perpetrators expressed their gratitude to the survivors who accepted receiving them in the community, and, more importantly, in their homes, while they thought they did not deserve it. On this note, a respondent said, “It was announced that we would go to [B] to construct a kitchen garden for her. I had confessed to having killed her husband, and I hesitated and wondered what would happen if I entered her house. Finally, I decided to go with others. We did our task, and at completion, she gave me a hoe and publicly stated that she took me like her brother. Then, I said that I would take one day per week to help her in farming activities free of charge in recognition of the forgiveness granted to me and taking me as a brother.” Moreover, during observation, the members showed that they have apparently overcome any discrimination or divisiveness.

The activities such as the construction and renovation of houses, construction of kitchen gardens, provision of livestock, provision of school materials and community health insurance, as well as savings and loan groups, have really paved the way to seeking, offering and valuing forgiveness within the community. A survivor respondent explained: “If someone asks forgiveness and you realize that he or she is serious, you cannot deny it.” Another respondent genocide survivor stated, “They constructed and repaired our houses, but we thought they were trying to deceive us. But as days went on, we realized that they were firmly determined and committed to do something good, and we forgave them.” Since the creation of the organization and the establishment of the reconciliation village, such livelihood practices have been conducted at various frequencies, depending on the need, but there are others which are regularly carried out, like savings and loan groups.

Creating safe spaces for discussion, reflection and story sharing

The livelihood capacities have also constituted a suitable place for meeting, discussion and reflection for community members. Members confirmed that, either on the way to or back from a place where an activity such as construction of kitchen gardens or giving livestock is taking place, or during the activity, they share their stories. A participant stated, “Whenever we meet for an activity, we cannot close it without sharing something about our stories. Sometimes, these men repeat their apology and we reiterate our forgiveness. We may give a hug to one another, and then we go.” This sounds understandable because, in rural areas, people do not have opportunities to meet except during group activities

or meetings convened by local authorities. On this, a participant commented: “We often meet when we have group activities scheduled, such as meetings of the savings and loan associations, construction of kitchen gardens, or receiving livestock; that is when we discuss how to better implement the good lessons we are offered.”

For former perpetrators, engaging in livelihood activities serves for them as evidence that they are no longer identified with their wrongdoing, but rather, are committed to promoting a community that is free from hatred and violence. One participant deplored his evildoing in the past and confirmed that he had changed for the better and forever. His statement was: “I strongly regret that I was involved in killing my neighbours and looting their property. I remember everything bad we did to them. I decided to be part of this organization, and when we construct these kitchen gardens or repair the houses, I feel that I am paying tribute to the survivors, and those who passed away can see that I have changed. You know, actions speak louder than words.” The same sentiment was shared by his counterparts released from prison after pleading guilty and confessing to offences committed during the genocide.

Survivors testified that trusting their neighbours (former perpetrators) was not easy, and they were able to do it after being together and working together for some time. When asked about how it came for them to forgive, a respondent stated: “I felt I could not bear it. I was even saddened to find myself in the same group with those who murdered my family members, but as we partnered with them in these daily activities and as they kept asking for forgiveness, I ended up trusting them and granted true forgiveness.” In addition, active engagement in the livelihood activities, on behalf of the former perpetrators, accelerated trust from the survivors, as explained by a member of the group discussion: “How can I refrain from calling upon my neighbour [K], even if he was in the other camp [of perpetrators], and share with him my problem while he participated in repairing my house? I cannot imagine otherwise!” The activities performed prove the intent of common good for the community.

Ownership of the model

On the part of sustainability, the study found that members of Rukara Reconciliation Village have developed a sense of ownership of the livelihood activities initiated by PeacEdu Initiative Rwanda. They consider them as their own activities, especially because they are part of their daily life. Suffice to say that it highlights that life in rural areas like Rukara is dominated by agricultural activities, and the organization opted to integrate its actions in the normal course of the life of the beneficiaries. Therefore, the members take these projects as part of their personal activities instead of seeing them as only prompted by an external organization. Moreover, the participants testified that they joined the reconciliation village because they were seeking peace and reconciliation individually and collectively, the reason for their commitment to preserve these acquisitions. A participant expressed his determination to always support the activities by saying, “[A] brought to us a very good organization and he is one of our children. They instructed us about unity and reconciliation, gave us livestock and constructed kitchen gardens, paid for our health insurance, and our children in schools are supported. We feel edified in different ways; nobody can disappoint him.”

Members of the reconciliation village are aware of the contribution of the livelihood capacities such as constructing kitchen gardens, distributing and keeping livestock, and engaging in savings and loan groups for their socio-economic development. For this, they expressed their full commitment to continuing the activities because, among factors which fuelled the genocide, there is poverty. Therefore, the livelihood activities contribute to fighting the poverty that may constitute a threat to post-conflict recovery. Respondents, at different periods of time, reiterated: “We know that poverty contributed to making the genocide worse and more widespread, because perpetrators were told that if they killed Tutsi, they would take their property, including livestock and crops. That is the way it was done. We work together to fight against poverty and anything that can make one of us envy something of his or her neighbour.” This commitment translates their awareness of getting rid of anything that may trigger the recurrence of conflict.

Monitoring and evaluation

PeacEdu Initiative Rwanda has established community-based monitoring and follow-up mechanisms to the extent that when the beneficiaries meet for an activity, especially in groups, they check on the status of members, either present or absent, inquire about challenges met and try to find solutions by themselves. A

member in group discussion stated, “When we meet, we ask one another different questions like: Have you heard that the kitchen garden of [name] has been damaged? That old woman over there cannot repair it by herself; she needs support from us.” They also go into details, like when a member says, “My seeds did not grow” or another replies,“Mine have grown and I would like you to come and collect plantlets. Whoever needs them can come to me.” Another participant would express her dismay, saying, “My kitchen garden was damaged by the cow. Would you assist in reconstruction?” These statements express the village members’ concern about the daily activities which unite them. This ownership probably contributes to guaranteeing the success of the activities and their sustainability.

Youth involvement

Youth’s commitment to the shared identity and activities of the reconciliation village is an indicator of its sustainability. At the establishment of the youth clubs, there was a question: “How can young people live in reconciliation while they do not have anything to reconcile?” The leadership of PeacEdu Initiative Rwanda and the parents found the best solution was to integrate the youth through their awareness of whatever is done in the reconciliation village. The experience revealed that village members’ livelihood activities have triggered young people being willing to explore more stories of their parents and neighbours about the genocide as a basis for peace and reconciliation. Definitely, parents expressed their hope in the youth to continue what they started, as “Young people here follow the experience they see from us and they love each other even more than we do. Youth like hearing the truth; when they ask questions, we tell them the truth, and this has nurtured their mutual love to the extent of interethnic marriage.” Adult participants, based on how the youth clubs meet, share their stories and aim high, and expressed their confidence in the youth for whom “they have paved a way” towards peace and reconciliation in their community.

Investing in the youth guarantees the sustainability of the reconciliation village and its activities. In fact, young people see what their parents and neighbours are involved in, ask them questions and then decide to be part of their activities and share the purposes of peace and reconciliation. A participant in group discussions stated, “We cannot forget about the youth, because if we ignore them, we risk having history repeated. The genocide was mostly committed by the youth, since it had been left behind. So, everything we do, they see it and we explain to them that we are reinforcing unity and reconciliation.” On their side, young people are interested in their parents’ work. As a youth club member stated, “We are proud of the activities done. We feel that we have to unite and live in harmony with others. When we meet and renovate a house, we find it very useful for the community, and we listen to personal stories.” This determination on behalf of the youth brings about the assurance that they will make the activities and their outcomes last long.

Cultural back-up and embeddedness

The beneficiaries also stated that the livelihood activities carried out in their village are enshrined in their culture and this is likely to contribute to the initiative being perennial. Some of the participants praised the founder of PeacEdu Initiative Rwanda for “having revived the Rwandan culture in their community” through giving livestock to one another, a practice commonly known as kwitura (giving to another person the offspring of livestock) and compared working together to guhana umubyizi (joining hands in agricultural activities). Such a statement was heard from a group discussion in the following terms: “[A] has revived the culture. We work together to construct kitchen gardens, we give livestock to one another. No single old widow is left behind. When vegetables have grown, everybody can take them for the children; all in all, we are Rwandans and share everything.”

Community members’ empowerment and participation in livelihood capacities showcase their potential to sustain peace and reconciliation among themselves and with others. In fact, through the livelihood activities carried out in the village, people become empowered and take control of their own lives, get the support they need, and become respected and confident in their community. This makes everyone feel at peace and ready for reconciling in order to maintain the already acquired peace. A respondent testified, “This organization has done for us impressive activities! In my case, I could not have the capacity to renovate my house, but they did for me. I used to have cows, but all of them were looted. The goat they gave me reminds me about rearing domestic animals. We do not beg money for health insurance. We have our savings; we are fine.” The

participants in focus group discussions expressed their wish to have the livelihood practices extended to a larger number of beneficiaries in order for them to expand peace and reconciliation. One of the beneficiaries stated, “I wish this organization would grow and expand the activities to more and more people; therefore, everyone will feel inner peace, no case of robbery will be recorded, no killer will remain in the community, no other evil will be committed, and unity and reconciliation will be achieved faster.”

Scalability and transferability

The study reveals that the results obtained in Rukara Reconciliation Village in terms of peace and reconciliation through the development of livelihood capacities may apply to other parts of Rwanda and even beyond, that is, Africa and other post-conflict parts of the world. A participant in focus group discussions, aware of the benefits accrued from his membership of the reconciliation village, expressed the wish to expand the experience to other parts. He had this to say: “I feel the results of this initiative should reach the whole country, and our activities should be extrapolated to other villages, cells and sectors, considering our achievements such as renovation of houses, kitchen gardens, livestock, forgiveness and healing, social well-being and harmony.”

To state the need for scaling up the initiative to accelerate unity and reconciliation in Rwanda, a respondent former perpetrator narrated his experience in prison. He stated, “We heard about confessing and asking for forgiveness. Some of us, myself included, did confess and we were released, but others did not. Some of them have served their sentence and went back home. I think they need to be taught about peace and reconciliation.” Another respondent added, “Those with whom we spent years in prison probably need socio-economic assistance, and thus benefitting from the same livelihood activities would be of utmost importance for them.” The same was expressed by the genocide survivors, where one of the group members recommended extending the initiative to other places, especially to cater for the needs of genocide survivors. The respondent stated, “I heard from one of my relatives in Mayaga that they had difficulties with their old houses. If PeacEdu were operating there, this would not be an issue for them.”

The participants appreciated the national policy of unity and reconciliation as well as various strategies put in place to ensure its effectiveness, starting from the grassroot level and reaching high levels of governance and administration. Considering the alignment of PeacEdu endeavours with the national policy of respecting, protecting and promoting people’s rights; upholding peace values and productive citizenship; and fostering forgiveness and sustaining peace and reconciliation, the reconciliation model of using livelihood activities could be extended to other parts of the country. In this respect, a respondent argued, “It is possible, considering the national policy of unity and reconciliation and related endeavours promoted everywhere in the country. As others said, we may go and share with them how we benefitted from the capacities, and I believe they will make their good choice. We should not keep it for ourselves, but rather, share with others across the country, if we have the means to do it.” The only challenge they pointed out was the limited financial means of the organization.

When asked whether his experience with Rukara Reconciliation Village may be applied in other social contexts, the founder of PeacEdu Initiative Rwanda expressed his optimism that it is possible on the grounds that promoting peace and reconciliation in the post-genocide context can be effectively done by people who experienced the tragedy either as a survivor or former perpetrator. On that, he had this to say: “A survivor knows better the weight of forgiveness, as the former perpetrator realizes better than anybody the cost of confession and apology. Both of them know the weight of moral and material damage caused or endured, and the cost of their reparation.” Nevertheless, contexts may differ from one another, and therefore responses should be adjusted and contextualized accordingly.

It is worth mentioning here that Rukara Reconciliation Village has been receiving guests from different corners of Africa and the world, especially those from areas torn apart by conflicts, such as South Sudan, the Central Africa Republic, Ethiopia and the United States of America. After sharing the village experience and success stories in relation to peace and reconciliation, the guests expressed their wish to have a chance of positive change in their respective communities. A respondent reported, “We always receive people from different corners of the world, who come to

see how successful are peace and reconciliation in our village. For example, those from South Sudan expressed their wish to have our experience replicated in their country, but the problem raised was the lack of political will." Suffice to note that although the concept of a reconciliation village may be unique, contextualization is always possible.

DISCUSSION

Overall, the present study identified six livelihood capacities in Rukara Reconciliation Village, namely, the construction and renovation of houses, construction of kitchen gardens, provision of livestock, payment of community-based health insurance, establishment of savings and loan groups, and provision of school materials. Some livelihood activities contribute to the acquisition of assets and personal property among beneficiaries, especially through agricultural production. Other livelihood activities have improved the health status of individuals and groups, increased their financial and social capital by bringing solutions to prevailing problems and addressing different vulnerabilities such as the lack of capacities and capabilities, failure to address basic needs, difficulties in overcoming asset breakdown, or failure of emotional, psychological or socio-economic recovery. Furthermore, this study shows that livelihood capacities proved to lead to peacebuilding and reconciliation outcomes such as enhancing societal belonging, putting common interests above private ones, mediating healing and fostering inner peace, acquiring different values through role modelling, nurturing collaboration and healthy relationships, rediscovering self-worth and dignity, and creating spaces for discussion, reflection and story sharing. The present study argues that the livelihood model is seen as sustainable because of the village members' ownership of its activities and the internal monitoring and evaluation mechanisms in place. Moreover, the youth involvement in the livelihood activities and their cultural back-up and embeddedness proved that the village model may continue even after the current generation has passed away. These sustainability factors constitute a solid foundation for the scalability and transferability of the initiative to other contexts, either in Rwanda, or Africa and other parts of the world.

The findings of this study align with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) in its Article 25(1), which states that, "Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control." In fact, the livelihood capacities serve the purpose of getting assets and access to resources or capital, addressing different vulnerabilities and transforming relations among people. They also constitute the means of securing the necessities of life through different types or categories of activities, as defined by a specific group of people in the course of its normal life.

In a post-conflict period, which is a time for rehabilitation, reconstruction, and initiating a course towards sustainable life, livelihood activities contribute to addressing different vulnerabilities faced by the people. In the study on political economy of internal conflict in Sri Lanka,[75] Samarasinghe reiterated that the vulnerability context may apply to the lack of capacities and capabilities, failure to address basic needs, difficulties in overcoming asset breakdown, or failure of emotional, psychological or socio-economic recovery. On the contribution of livelihood activities in addressing conflict, Kvitashvili reiterated that, since conflict damages livelihoods, helping restore access to resources can build a foundation for peace and reconciliation.[76] In this respect, livelihood programmes help insulate communities from emerging conflicts, mitigate the impact of conflict on people's lives, provide alternatives to help communities resist extremist influences while building local capacities for self-help, and hasten post-conflict social reintegration. The same point was raised by Maxwell et al., who assigned a twofold objective to livelihoods in conflict-affected situations, namely, generating material welfare benefits and contributing to peacebuilding outcomes.[77] In addition, they viewed livelihood activities as ingredients to "quick recovery from

[75] Stanley Samarasinghe, *Political Economy of Internal Conflict in Sri Lanka* (Netherlands Institute of International Relations, 2003).

[76] Kvitashvili, *Livelihoods & Conflict*, 8.

[77] Maxwell et al., *Livelihoods*, 13.

conflict," the reason why they positioned them among the first priorities to consider for the population in a vulnerable situation or its aftermath. This was corroborated by the findings of the present study.

The livelihood activities carried out in Rukara Reconciliation Village bring community members together to share vulnerabilities and their solutions. The experience proves that when individuals work on a team over a period of time, they have an opportunity to get to know more about one another, and become good acquaintances. They share personal lives, develop routines, have deeper conversations, and talk about hopes and aspirations for themselves and families. Sinclair emphasized that seeing the neighbours on bad days and on great days brings about enjoyment within the community and allows everyone to be valued for themselves.[78] The same point was supported by Mafeza while inquiring about the restoration of relationships between former genocide perpetrators and survivors of genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda through reconciliation villages. He found that when groups share a common or superordinate goal that requires a joint effort for its attainment by both groups, "the relations between their members are likely to be better, and their attitudes towards each other more positive, than if the two groups were competing for a goal."[79] Indeed, under the influence of their new interests and engagements, the group members begin to see their clashing commitments in a new light, and gradually learn to see each other as individual members of a family and to recognize their own interest in upholding a common set of basic rights for all.

Furthermore, livelihood activities were praised for their contribution to the prevention of conflict recurrence.[80] In fact, people whose livelihoods are again damaged by conflict may be motivated to continue violence or fighting in order to resituate what they have lost and therefore restore their living. McNamee and Muyangwa corroborated this idea when they provided one of the justifications for development projects and activities implemented by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and donors in different zones torn apart by conflicts.[81] Indeed, these activities and projects are meant not only to foster reconstruction and development, but also to consolidate peace, build local capacity to manage conflicts, and prevent the recurrence of conflicts, among others. Along the same lines, Orago cautioned about failure to put in place post-conflict socio-economic development policies and activities, which may lead to fragile post-conflict societies vulnerable to the recurrence of conflict.[82] Thus, post-conflict achievements in peacebuilding and reconciliation are sustained through economic and well-being restoration.

Rwanda has been deeply wounded by the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi. The concept of "wound" is mentioned multiple times and closely linked with peace and reconciliation, and broadly refers to emotional and relational effects of the genocide.[83] These wounds include not only those directly inflicted by the genocide against the Tutsi but also all other wounds caused by pre- and post-genocide hardships that Rwandans endured. Despite being different in their nature and severity, the survivors' wounds have been characterized as being critical, especially referring to the massive loss of family members and loved ones, without forgetting material losses of assets and property. On the side of former perpetrators, they also have emotional and material wounds. Rukara Reconciliation Village has dealt with the woundedness, apology and forgiveness through the implementation of livelihood activities. Other strategies used by other communities for the purpose of healing people's wounds have included the provision of safe and conducive spaces for people to share their experiences and open up their wounds.[84] The experience of Mbyo Reconciliation Village is that they established community healing spaces (ibiganiro mvurankuvure) for unity, reconciliation and restorative justice after realizing that both survivors and perpetrators were traumatized. Indeed, it was difficult for perpetrators, despite having confessed and apologized, to live with the

[78] James Sinclair, *What is Social Well-Being? Definition, Types, and How to Achieve It* (2021), https://www.betterup.com/blog/what-is-social-well-being-definition-types-and-how-to-achieve-it.

[79] Mafeza, "Restoring Relationship," 793.

[80] Kvitashvili, *Livelihoods & Conflict.*

[81] Terence McNamee and Monde Muyangwa. *The State of Peacebuilding in Africa: Lessons Learned for Policymakers and Practitioners* (Washington: Palgrave Macmillan, 2021): 10.

[82] Nicholas Wasonga Orago, "Socio-Economic Development and Resource Redistribution as Tools for Conflict Prevention and Post-Conflict Peace Building in Fragile Societies: A Comparative Analysis of Burundi and Rwanda," *Global Campus Human Rights Journal*, 1 (2017): 254.

[83] Phuong N. Pham, Harvey M. Weinstein, and Timothy Longman, "Trauma and PTSD Symptoms in Rwanda: Implications for Attitudes toward Justice and Reconciliation," *Jama* 292, no.5 (2004): 602–612.

[84] Al Fuertes, "Storytelling and Its Transformative Impact in the Philippines," *Conflict Resolution Quarterly* 29, no. 3 (2012): 2.

survivors and to pay back damages, on the one hand, and for survivors to value and acknowledge the perpetrators' confession and apology, on the other hand. Another opportunity for healing the wounds was the commemoration period of the genocide, for both survivors and perpetrators to reveal their wounds, and ask for and grant forgiveness.[85]

The complexity of forgiveness for peacebuilding and reconciliation has been highlighted in numerous studies, which have corroborated the fact that it is a process that often takes place in a non-linear way, depending on circumstances. Enright explored some steps to seek, offer and value forgiveness, including having a "forgivingly fit" environment, recognition of every person as unique and irreplaceable, showing love in everyday encounters, helping others who were harmed overcome their suffering, and willingness to protect the community from a cycle of hatred and violence.[86] The steps are easily perceived in livelihood activities, especially through building trust among people. Govier and Verwoerd emphasized that building a foundation of trust is embedded in reliability through doing what is said to be done, being honest with others, openness, consistency, and loyalty, as willingness to protect others and be on their side.[87] The later factors were identified by the current study as part of the livelihood outcomes.

In relation to the time for peace and reconciliation to be effective, the study findings agree with the wider literature that peace, peacebuilding and reconciliation are considered under the perspective of "a continuum,"[88] where peacebuilding is seen as made up of institutions, strategies, approaches and activities. Indeed, it is a whole made up of many parts or a continual sequence in which adjacent elements may or may not be perceptibly different from each other, but their purpose is quite one. From the lessons from South Africa in terms of forgiveness, Russell explained some necessary steps, including an airing of the details of the suffering inflicted, followed by an acknowledgment and apology of the harm done by the perpetrator, and then the final act is that of forgiveness on the part of the victim.[89] Indeed, through acknowledging wrongdoing and responsibility, expressing sorrow, and taking the initiative to restore the relationship, the attempts to bridge the gap between the victim and perpetrator may successfully take place.

This is linked with the concept of trust-based philanthropy. The approach is concerned with building trust and listening to the communities served, defining local problems and deploying funding in a participatory manner, offering support beyond the cheque – responsive, adaptive, non-monetary support for capacity and organizational health, recognizing and using all the assets, engaging in continual self-reflection to break down power dynamics, and using available means.[90] Livelihood activities in Rukara Reconciliation Village support the beneficiaries in a way that enables them not to be dependent on the aid, but rather, build their own capacity to handle the problems of current and future times. As for the sustainability of peacebuilding and reconciliation efforts, in reference to livelihood outcomes achieved in the village, the study concurs with core elements of sustainable peace reported by the National Unity and Reconciliation Commission as honest acknowledgment of the harm or injury each party has inflicted on the other, sincere regrets and remorse for the injury done, readiness to apologize for one's role in inflicting the injury, readiness of the conflicting parties to "let go" of the anger and bitterness caused by the conflict and the injury, commitment by the offender not to repeat the injury, sincere effort to redress past grievances that caused the conflict and compensate the damage caused to the extent possible, and entering into a new mutually enriching relationship.[91]

In consideration of models of reconciliation villages, Rukara Reconciliation Village is the only reconciliation village in Rwanda started by a former member of the same area, living in peace, healing and reconciling with confessed perpetrators from the same place. Members of the Rukara Reconciliation Village live in a dispersed settlement structure, where individual households and farmsteads occur in a cluster of scattered parcels of land. They come together for accomplishing their livelihood activities or when they attend an event requiring their presence all together. In addition, there are other reconciliation villages established by Prison Fellowship Rwanda (PFR), a non-governmental organization that works in partnership with the Government of Rwanda and its relevant agencies, local and international organizations, as well as UN agencies, to foster interventions that support psychosocial healing, peacebuilding and reconciliation, restorative justice, crime prevention, human rights promotion

[90] John Brothers, "A Framework for Corporate Social Good," *Stanford Social Innovation Review* 22, no. 2 (2024): 8, https://doi.org/10.48558/QCSM-X390.

[91] NURC, *Unity and Reconciliation Process*, 43.

and legal aid, intervening in emergencies as well as nurturing socio-economic empowerment in Rwanda in the wake of the 1994 genocide against Tutsi. This NGO constructed eight reconciliation villages: in Bugesera, Musanze, Kayonza and Ngoma Districts, comprising genocide survivors and former perpetrators from different areas, and returnees from the neighbouring countries. According to PFR Management, the reconciliation villages are outcomes of dialogues between survivors and former perpetrators and interventions carried out by the organization in the communities. Their integrated settlement structure, different from the Rukara dispersed settlement structure, was planned to serve not only unity and reconciliation purposes, but also offer economic opportunities, rational land use and management, and servicing with basic social economic and physical infrastructure. Their beneficiaries live in side-by-side houses, where the occupants were randomly selected to the extent that the families living in houses next to one another had no prior relationship. The living together in an integrated village also served as a field for the practice of the teachings they had from Prison Fellowship Rwanda and government agencies.

To the question whether these human experiences within Rukara Reconciliation Village may be applicable to other contexts, populations or settings, or the degree of congruence that may exist between the sending and receiving context,[92] the study revealed that contextualization of the solution is worth considering, in accordance with the particularities of each community. Barnes et al. (2005) pointed out some of the particularities such as social, cultural, and historical factors, details about the subjects and location, and applying a critical judgment about the findings of a specific context. Despite being a difficult endeavour in human sciences, as human behaviors are too difficult to understand and predict, and they change over time and per situation,[93] the present study attempted to show areas of transferability of its findings with regard to the contribution of livelihood activities to peace and reconciliation. Last, the findings reveal the necessity to extend the horizons to deeply investigate peacebuilding and reconciliation through not only livelihood activities, but also other factors such as teaching, government and religious interventions, through an integrated approach.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study examined whether and how livelihood capacities have contributed to peace and reconciliation efforts in Rukara Reconciliation Village and assessed the extent of their transferability to other contexts of violence and conflict or their aftermath. Informed by the constructivism paradigm, the research used the case study design and the qualitative approach for in-depth analysis of the experiences of individuals and groups in their real-life context. The study population was composed of members of Rukara Reconciliation Village, the leadership of PeacEdu Initiative Rwanda, key informants from a donor, and a local organization having another experience of reconciliation villages. They were purposively and conveniently sampled because of the important information expected from them. Data were collected using focus group discussions, semi-structured individual interviews, site observations, and documentary research. The analysis of data was done with both thematic and narrative analysis.

The research identified six livelihood activities carried out by PeacEdu Initiative Rwanda in Rukara Reconciliation Village, namely, the construction and renovation of houses, construction of kitchen gardens, provision of livestock, payment of community-based health insurance, establishment of savings and loan groups, and provision of school materials. They have been done in the social context of a community of genocide survivors and former perpetrators living side by side in the same zone within a dispersed settlement structure.

Some livelihood activities contribute to the generation of assets, property or resources for the beneficiaries. These activities carried out on the land, such as the construction of kitchen gardens and raising of livestock, are counted as personal property that yields agricultural production. Other activities aim at improving the health status of individuals and groups, and others at increasing their financial capital. The livelihood activities are further counted under the social capital category, like those which bring solutions to existing problems. The post-conflict period being a time for rehabilitation, reconstruction, and initiating a

[92] Joan Rodon and Feliciano Sesé, "Towards a Framework for the Transferability of Results in IS Qualitative Research. Sprouts, *Working Papers on Information Systems* 8, no. 17 (2008), http://sprouts.aisnet.org/8-17.

[93] Jeffrey Barnes, Kerri Conrad, Christof Demont-Heinrich, Mary Graziano, Dawn Kowalski, Jamie Neufeld, Jen Zamora, and Mike Palmquist, *Generalizability and Transferability, Writing@CSU*, (Colorado State University, 2005), https://writing.colostate.edu/guides/guide.cfm?guideid=65.

course towards sustainable life, livelihood activities contribute to addressing different vulnerabilities, such as the lack of capacities and capabilities, failure to address basic needs, difficulties in overcoming asset breakdown, or failure of emotional, psychological or socio-economic recovery, as faced by the community.

The outcomes of the livelihood activities were expressed through their impact on social well-being and promoting common interests, healing the wounds of genocide, upholding peace values and productive citizenship, restoration of self-identity and rehumanization, and fostering forgiveness and trust building. In fact, the village members have been able to define, share, develop and sustain healthy and meaningful relationships with one another through the activities carried out together as a team. Over a period of time, working on a team, individuals have had an opportunity to get to know more about one another, and become good acquaintances.

Community members of Rukara Reconciliation Village acknowledged the existence of different wounds and vulnerabilities among themselves. They also demonstrated healing and trust-building strategies, including living and working together, which enabled them to gradually recover the lost self-identity and human dignity in the post-genocide period, either for survivors or former perpetrators. Indeed, both the survivors and former perpetrators confirmed their feeling of being surrounded by people who value and respect them, in an environment where they meet, discuss and reflect, and feel more confident, and secure, enabling them to take social roles, and therefore be engaged in positive acts to challenge their negative thoughts and trauma.

PeacEdu Initiative Rwanda has developed among the members of Rukara Reconciliation Village a sense of ownership of the livelihood activities initiated for their benefit, especially because they are part of their daily life and enshrined in their culture. In addition, members have generated a sense of shared responsibility for sustainable peace and reconciliation through investing in livelihood activities to the extent that, over a period of time, these livelihood capacities will contribute to minimising any risk of experiencing conflict anew. Moreover, they are an important means to fight poverty that may constitute a threat to post-conflict recovery.

Finally, the study revealed a high probability that the results obtained in Rukara Reconciliation Village in terms of peace and reconciliation through the development of livelihood capacities may apply to other contexts in the country. Having experienced almost the same history of genocide and its aftermath, and in consideration of the national policy with regard to respect of people's rights, other parts of the country may embark on the same pathway towards upholding and sustaining peace and reconciliation. This may further apply to communities outside the country which face or are recovering from conflict and violence or strive for the restoration of peace. Nevertheless, contextualization and customization of the livelihood capacities are necessary to make them fit individual community needs and goals in terms of peacebuilding and reconciliation.

The study formulated some recommendations, taking into account the identified livelihood capacities and the need to maximize chances for every community to confidently engage with the process of peace and reconciliation.

1. The livelihood activities carried out in Rukara Reconciliation Village have yielded results, at a certain level, in terms of peacebuilding and reconciliation, but their impact would be more significant if they were upgraded to a higher level to offer more chances for socio-economic development.

2. The community expressed the need to welcome a larger number of people following the interest and outcomes of the livelihood activities, but the challenge pointed out was insufficient means to do it. Therefore, PeacEdu Initiative Rwanda should invest in increasing its capacities to serve more people.

3. Rukara Reconciliation Village has been practising peace and reconciliation in action, where the village members nurture their experience within their community and context. Thus, these same people should be empowered so that they may transfer their experience to peers in other parts of the country, considering individual contexts, needs and means. Thus, these same people would be fit for purpose to transfer their experience to other parts of the country, considering individual contexts, needs and means.

4. Considering that the Rukara Reconciliation Village model is established and functions within the community following the dispersed settlement structure where people live according to their ordinary lifestyle, it could be explored whether this model is more beneficial than other models of reconciliation villages constructed in the integrated settlement structure.

5. An integrated approach to peacebuilding, where livelihood activities are in interrelation with trainings, seminars, healing sessions, church teachings, policies and laws, and political efforts, should be explored so as to assess their level of contribution to peace and reconciliation in Rukara Reconciliation Village.

6. It would be useful to document the success stories of the reconciliation village and its members for future generations and use in the wider literature on peace and reconciliation.

APPENDICES

Appendix I: Focus Group Discussion Guide: Members of Rukara Reconciliation Village

1. Can you tell us about your life (well-being, socio-economic, interpersonal and group relationships) in this village some years before the genocide against the Tutsi?
2. Can you tell us about individual and collective hardships/challenges/stressors undergone after the genocide? Please focus on those considered as consequences of the genocide.
3. How did you know about Peace Education Initiative Rwanda? How has it helped you cope with the hardships/challenges/stressors in the aftermath of the genocide?
4. What livelihood activities do you carry out in the village and how do you perform them? What are the roles of individuals and the organization (Peace Education Initiative Rwanda)?
5. Can you explain how the livelihood activities have contributed to the improvement of your individual and collective economic well-being?
6. Can you tell us about the quality of your living together and interpersonal relationships?
7. In addition to economic well-being, have the livelihood activities contributed to changing your living together, reconciliation, or resilience?
8. To what extent do you think that continuing working together in livelihood activities strengthens your commitment to sustainable peace?
9. What lessons have you learnt from your work with Peace Education Initiative Rwanda with regard to peacebuilding and reconciliation?
10. Knowing that Rwandans in different corners of the country were affected by the genocide and considering your own experience here in Rukara Reconciliation Village, to what extent do you think that your journey with Peace Education Initiative Rwanda may help others as far as peacebuilding and reconciliation are concerned?
11. Would you like to share your experience with other Rwandans as to how to build sustainable peace and achieve reconciliation through livelihood activities?

Appendix II: Focus Group Discussion: Members of Mbyo Reconciliation Village

1. Can you tell us about the background to your reconciliation village? How was it created? How did people acknowledge the idea to start it? How did people join the reconciliation village?
2. Please describe the activities oriented to peace and reconciliation which are done in your RV.
3. Which among the activities do you find more impactful for peace and reconciliation than others?
4. What standing do livelihood activities in your reconciliation village have? To what extent do they contribute to the enhancement of peace and reconciliation efforts?
5. What would you wish to be added/strengthened among the programmes/activities run in your RV for more sustainable peace and reconciliation?

Appendix III: Interview Guide: Founder of PeacEdu Initiative Rwanda

1. Can you tell us the background to the creation of PeacEdu Initiative Rwanda?
2. From creation to today, can you highlight the achievements of the organization with regard to livelihood and reconciliation?
3. Can you tell us about the most challenging situations you have coped with?
4. What do you think is unique among your livelihood, peace and reconciliation activities?
5. Drawing on your experience working with Rukara RV, can you elaborate on the link that livelihoods entertain with peace and reconciliation in the community?
6. What are your future plans to increase the impact of PeacEdu Initiative Rwanda through the livelihood, peace and reconciliation programmes?

Appendix IV: Interview Guide: Operations Manager of PeacEdu Initiative Rwanda

1. Can you tell us about the motivation for the introduction of livelihood in peace and reconciliation efforts made by PeacEdu Initiative Rwanda?
2. What are the livelihood activities run by PeacEdu in the community for the purposes of peace and reconciliation?
3. How do you evaluate the outcomes of livelihood activities (and other programmes) with regard to their contribution to peace and reconciliation?
4. What are challenges encountered in the implementation of livelihood activities which may jeopardize peace and reconciliation in the community?
5. In your view, how do you see beneficiaries' satisfaction with livelihood activities implemented in the community?

Appendix V: Interview Guide: Donor or Sponsor of PeacEdu Initiative Rwanda

1. How did it come about for you to provide funding to the livelihood programme (X, Y, Z) implemented by PeacEdu Initiative Rwanda?
2. Did your funding meet the expectations you had about the programme?
3. Can you evaluate the outcomes of the funded livelihood programme/activities with regard to their contribution to peace and reconciliation in the community?
4. Would you like to fund another programme in line with livelihood enhancement, either through PeacEdu Imitative Rwanda or another organization in another place?

Appendix VI: Interview Guide: Staff of Prison Fellowship Rwanda

1. Can you tell us about the background and motivation for the programme of reconciliation villages?
2. Can you elaborate on programmes/activities implemented in the reconciliation villages and their contribution to the achievement of unity, resilience and social cohesion?
3. How do you evaluate the contribution of reconciliation villages to peace and reconciliation among Rwandans, in comparison to other peacebuilding programmes/activities?
4. What are major challenges/difficulties encountered in the RV with regard to achieving peace and reconciliation?
5. Would you wish the RV framework to be transferred/applied to other places in the country? Why and how can this transfer be effected?

Appendix VII: Observation Protocol: Households in Rukara Reconciliation Village

1. Tangible livelihood facts/activities carried out at home level.
2. Tangible livelihood facts/activities carried out at community level.
3. Activities carried out together between reconciliation village residents and level of interaction during those activities.
4. Individual stories/testimonies about positive changes brought about by livelihood activities already implemented.
5. Status of needs in livelihoods at household and community levels.

Appendix VIII: Guide for Documentary Research

Information about members of the reconciliation village (survivors, former perpetrators, bystanders, youth, others).

Information about donors and sponsors and livelihood programmes/activities they have supported.

Data and reports on livelihood activities implemented, their beneficiaries, outputs and impact on peace and reconciliation efforts.

Testimonies (notes of appreciation, pieces of advice, awards) from people outside the RV on the organization's activities, especially in relation to peace, reconciliation and livelihood.

Assessment of the quality of the relationships and interactions among residents of the reconciliation village.

Aegis Trust Rwanda

Kigali Genocide Memorial,

The Aegis Trust, P.O Box 7251,

Kigali, Rwanda

Copyright © 2023 All Rights Reserved.

Registered Charity

www.genocideresearchhub.org.rw