



10/28/2019

Dear Friends, Supporters and Donors,

We are happy to share with you the second part of our conference report on Peace & Gender Reconciliation.



## “PEACE & GENDER RECONCILIATION” 2019 FAITH & GENDER CONFERENCE – “UNITY-IN-DIVERSITY”



Among the greatest challenges the world faces today including globalization, economic crisis, widening gender inequalities, lies the undefeated aspiration for peace, which implies the necessity of finding a way of living together better, in a world of growing complexity and uncertainty.

This year's conference in Rwanda that gathered 98 faith actors and leaders from across Africa provided a safe space for reflection, discussion and understanding the meaning of Gender reconciliation, peace and the

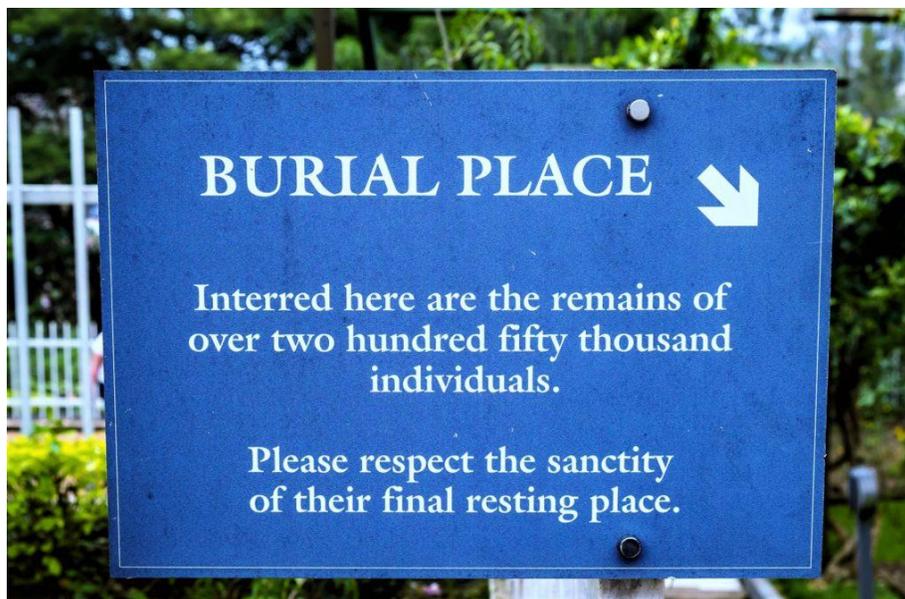
connection between gender- based violence in times of war and conflicts. The Reverend Philbert Kalisa, (founder and executive director REACH- Rwanda) presented on this topic in line with his work in reconciling perpetrators and survivors of the Rwanda genocide. Delegates later visited the Kigali Genocide Memorial where 250,000 victims were interred and later heard testimony from two people, one a perpetrator and the other a survivor of the 1994 genocide during Rev. Kalisa's presentation.

## The perpetrator

Desman stands at the podium and asks us to raise our hands if we forgive him for what he had done. He was a security guard during in 1994 tribal cleansing genocide in Rwanda. Months before the genocide, they were gathered with other of his friends. They were trained on how to identify, their enemy with certain physical attributes. Their hearts, their minds were filled with hatred for the common enemy. *“We believed what our superiors said, I was young and this is what we were taught” Desman recalls.*

Weeks before the genocide they were divided into groups and provided with machetes and other instruments of death. Fear spread in the land of a thousand hills. Protests in the city and road blocks.

*“We torched their houses, we killed them, and it did not matter whether they were our neighbors or friends. They were our common enemy I don't remember how many people I killed, but they were many.”*





Path way to the burial gardens at the genocide memorial

## The Survivor

Amisha's perpetrator was Desman. She was 14 when the genocide started. On the fateful night men came into their home with machetes. She was born of parents who were Tutsi, they hacked all her family of six sisters to death. She escaped with serious injuries. (*Amisha shows us the scars of deep cuts in her head and shoulder*). The crowd went into a sober mood. She hid in the bushes for days with injuries eating soil to feed her stomach. She recognized someone who would help her, they took her to Desman's home for safety. He agreed to let her stay. Desman was married at the time. Amisha thought she was safe.

*“They kept me in a small room, Desman and his men raped me several times until I passed out from the pain .I did not shower, I was mostly hungry. I could beg for food from Desmans wife but they threw me scrubs” Amisha recalls with tears and pain in her eyes.*

Weeks went on and a time came when Desman and his family had to move to another village. Desman ordered his men to finish off Amisha. They beat her and threw her in a pit, she was left to die. They threw other dead bodies in the pit and left. *“I climbed over dead bodies to see the light .I was*

*in the pit for days you can imagine what I was eating” Amisha says in despair. The rebels had now taken over and people came out calling names to see who was still alive. Amisha was rescued and brought to a church where other survivors were.*



Peaceful Gardens at the Genocide Memorial

## Forgiveness and Reconciliation

Amisha later went back home *“It was hard to see families of our neighbors yet all my family was gone.” Amisha says.* One day Desman was walking in the village and he recognized Amisha. He could not believe she was still alive. Filled with guilt and the need to be forgiven he sent a young boy to give Amisha a message on a piece of paper. She declined many times. Many months went by, Amisha finally agreed to meet with her perpetrator.

*“The process to even think about forgiving him was not easy, I cried every time I thought about what he did to me and my family, but today Desman is like a brother to me. We are friends whenever there is a problem in his family he calls me and he visits me with his wife” Amisha says with a smile on her face.*

Amisha brought Desman and his wife back to church and he was forgiven and they all started new lives, they eat, they share, they laugh together.

*(Based on a true story, names and other events have been changed for privacy reasons)*



Part of cemented mass grave where families, friends and guests visit to give their respects

The 100-days genocide was not just about murder, many women and girls met their deaths with particular brutality, rape and gender based torture. It is estimated that over 300,000 women and girls were raped. Many orphaned children and deep physical and psychological wounds of estranged relationships was all that was left.

# SPEAKERS NOTES

“Reconciliation is the greatest challenge and yet the only hope for Rwanda, Africa and other nations of the world as well. For Genuine reconciliation to happen two pillars have to be found otherwise there is no reconciliation at all. One, Genuine repentance and confession by the perpetrator. Two, Forgiveness. These things are not easy to understand. We can never insist or demand to be forgiven. We can only ask in humility knowing that it can never be deserved and leave the outcome in God’s hands.” – Rev. Philbert Kalisa (Founder and Executive Director, REACH – Rwanda)



Rev. Philbert Kalisa (Speaker on peace & Reconciliation in Rwanda) and Rev. Dominic (EFOGE) at the podium during the 2019 faith & gender conference in Kigali, Rwanda



DELEGATES AT THE KIGALI GENOCIDE MEMORIAL

But in all of this we must remember our active participation in gender-based violence. In honor of the Victims of the genocide, families of perpetrators and survivors who are working hard to establish relationships again. We have an obligation to prevent such deep wounds from ever happening in our communities.

**\*GENOCIDE NEVER AGAIN\***

From Ekklesia Foundation Team; *Thank You!*

[Click here to learn more: Conference report Part 2](#)

***Thank you for all your Support and Prayers.***

[2019 International Conference Report Part 1\)](#)

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