

Rwanda, Together

[00:00:28] I am Christophe Mbonyingabo. I am from Rwanda and I'm the director of CARSA.

[00:00:54] Describing Rwanda during the genocide, it's really very hard because what happened. It's undescrivable.

[00:01:09] A million people were killed and at this time were killed by their neighbors with a very traditional weapons, not guns, or being shot.

[00:01:23] Neighbors were supposed to protect their neighbors, family members were supposed to protect their family members. They're the ones who were killing them.

[00:01:31] It was dark because this Hutu, Tutsi, and Twa were not and are not ethnic groups.

[00:01:36] They're just social classes. So you imagine now people speaking the same language, the same culture, live the same neighborhood, they have intermarriage. Now they're killing each other for no clear reason just because of the genocide propoganda, the political propoganda. So that's why it was really hard.

[00:02:05] You know, a genocide cannot happen, a genocide cannot take place, a genocide cannot be called genocide if there isn't government involvement. So currently with the policy of the new government for reconciliation and unity that's the hope, there is a political will towards unity and reconciliation. Which is very important. But secondly, it's dedication to the young people.

[00:02:36] And creating space where young people grow up in a different environment, where there's no divisive laws, where there's no discrimination. Where there's not having these rhetorics and speeches from the politicians, which are, you know, pushing them towards it. But currently, every speech is more towards unity and forgiveness and reconciliation. So with those structures, political structures, but also secondly, community structures, such as CARSA- the organization I work with, where these young people see widow who have lost their family members left by herself and now she is able to not only forgive the perpetrator, to not only forgive the very same person, who have murdered her entire family, but welcoming the person into her house, feed him -that's a clear sign for the young people. That forgiveness, reconciliation is possible. And that's the way. That's the direction.

[00:04:18] CARSA has been working with the young people, especially kids who were born after the genocide. And these kids are obviously coming from these two sides- survivors and perpetrators, and who don't know much of the narratives. You know, they were they did not witness.

[00:05:02] So when I see them coming together, playing together and all the initiatives that are undergoing and these students, you know, being the same schools and going together, I think my hope is for them to grow in a different context, different environment.

[00:05:47] Genocide. Violence, brutality. It's not Rwandan issue, it's not African issue, it's human issue. Why? Because with all the propaganda, political propaganda, that people, simple civilians, were exposed to. They were educated about division, hatred, and dehumanization, the media portraying Tutsi being evil, being snakes and all that. That's put so many people to get involved in the genocide.

[00:06:20] If any society is being exposed to a hatred speech, divisive speeches and all these kinds of discriminatory rhetorics, people kind of get easily to that other end, that other end where they kill one another. But secondly what they can learn it's like this other side. It's the side of hope. The side of, we cannot wait until we get to the dark.

[00:06:50] There's clear sign, when groups of people they start dividing themselves from can be racial issues, can be ethnic issues, religious issues. When one group is considering the other as less human, as the evil, as the source of everything, then it's a clear sign. It's the click. Is the red light telling stop. Stop, don't get to the other end. So it's time to start saying, let's deal with that, let's sit together as a society and start dealing with our problem before we get to the violence. But even when we get to the violence, the violence is not the end. Out after the violence, people can choose again to restore their broken relationships.

[00:07:36] I believe those are key lessons the rest of the world could learn from Rwanda.

[00:07:43] And educating young people, especially so that they grow, understanding that we cannot make it alone despite of our differences. But when you find yourself in the same community, the same nation, there's no stability, there's no prosperity if, without unity, it's impossible.