

Trauma healing and sustainable development for Batwa

Updated version of 15 April 2010

1 .Background and Needs

Batwa is one of the three group ethnics in Rwanda (Hutu, Tutsi and Batwa). Batwa have another name, which is “abasizwe inyuma n’amateka”, which means, “people whom history has left behind”. This also means they have been forgotten. During the genocide, some were implicated in the killings, others were killed, though the killing was between Hutu and Tutsi. Because of how this group was ignored, they found nothing good in other Rwandans, and decided not to live with them. Their traditional niche in society was as potters, but the need for their products has diminished with the availability of plastic and metal vessels and containers. These people used to live in the forest, raising their families, finding their food and doing their activities from there. Because of policies focused on at conservation and tourism, they are no longer permitted to live there. They live alone in their own villages; they don’t send their children to school, and don’t participate in any government activity. They like to come to the roadside to ask for help, and they sell their pots very cheaply there.

Many years of being ignored or being killed has resulted in a very high number of vulnerable people. To help this group of Batwa to deal with these consequences and to recognize their rights as Rwandans HROC plans to work closely with them, drawing them out of their isolation to begin to reconnect with others and to improve their standard of living.

2 .Goals and Objectives

The goal of this proposal is to promote deep and lasting healing among Batwa by engaging them to connect and support one another.

The objectives of this proposal are as follows:

1. To increase awareness and understanding of the concept of trauma and trust among at least 200 people
2. To create lasting relationships between Batwa and other ethnic groups
3. To conduct 10 community-based HROC workshops in 2 communities, offering a forum for 200 participants to begin personal journeys of healing and collective processes of moving through and beyond their communities’ experiences of mistrust and trauma.
4. To follow on with 3 kitchen gardening workshops in each area – 6 in all - to improve physical and psychological security and well-being, the health of children and adults, and skills for making the most of very limited resources of land and money.
5. To establish an ongoing presence in each community through follow-up meetings and community celebrations after the completion of all workshops.

3. Proposed activities

Grant funding will enable HROC to build on the introductory workshops done in 2008 and introduce additional elements, working in 2 locations. We will conduct 4 1-day debates, 10 3-day intensive workshops, 6 2-day kitchen gardening workshops, 10 1-day follow-ups and 2 1-day community celebrations.

Debates

We plan to first conduct 4 debates before doing the basic workshops. During the introductory workshops we did in 2008 we found that people need first to understand why they are invited and the importance of these workshops. For many times when Batwa are invited they don't respond to the invitation, as they are afraid of the local authorities and perceive any interventions as threatening. During these debates we will talk about the background of Rwanda, human rights and their right to participate.

Basic HROC workshops

We will conduct 10 basic workshops. In these workshops participants will learn about the definition of trauma and its causes, symptoms and consequences. The workshops will introduce the stages of grief and mourning, deep anger that rises out of trauma, and the question of trust and mistrust in Rwandan society. (The HROC Manual for the Basic Workshop describes the work and can be found at aglifpt.org/programs/hroc.)

Growing Together workshops

We will conduct 6 workshops for participants in the HROC workshops, demonstrating sustainable intensive kitchen gardening and teaching about nutrition and soil fertility. The workshops will make explicit connections between the psychological and emotional learning in the basic HROC workshops and the physical and emotional benefits of a measure of independence from expensive and uncertain food supplies.

Follow-up workshops

We will conduct 10 follow-up workshops: 5 before the community celebrations and 5 after the community celebrations. These follow-ups will bring together people who have been in HROC workshops.

Community celebrations

We will also conduct 2 community celebrations: one in each community. These community celebrations will bring together the people who have been trained and their relatives, community leaders, church leaders and people from other ethnic groups.

4. Expected outcomes

At the completion of the first year of this project we expect to have the following outcomes:

1. At least 200 people who can recognize the impact and symptoms of trauma and mistrust and who have identified how they can begin their own healing and trust building process.
2. Strengthened relationships among Batwa and between people from different groups (e.g Batwa and Batutsi or Bahutu), leading toward deep healing and reconnection. As an indicator participants should demonstrate an understanding that trauma can be experienced by everyone - both Batwa and other ethnic groups. Additionally, they will be able to express their different feelings and understanding from other groups. They will also be able to recognize their rights and participate in community trauma healing and reconciliation processes and development.
3. A simple technique for growing nutritious food will have been learned and can be passed on. Increased self-confidence and better nutrition will be beginning.

5. Time line

April--Initiate contacts in the two communities, communicate with local authorities, and recruit community members who will attend debates.

May and June--Conduct 4 community debates with 50 participants each.

July--4 Basic HROC workshops

August--4 Basic HROC workshops

September--2 Basic HROC workshops

October--6 2-day Growing Together Workshops.

November--10 1-day follow up workshops

December--2 community celebrations and evaluation of project

Everything must be completed by Dec 31 because AGLI, Elizabeth, and Dave Z will need to send in narrative and financial reports in order for us to be able to apply for a follow-up grant for 2011.

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