



COOPERATION CIRCLE PROFILE

Réseau Culturel SANGWA

Faiths /Traditions Represented: 60 member: Islam Muslim, Christian Catholic, Christian Catholic, Seventh Day Adventist, Christian Adventist Hutu/Tutsi

Location of CC: Rwanda

Primary Contact: Vice Chairperson, Anasthasie Mukamana
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Key Areas of Focus: Peacebuilding, conflict prevention through arts/culture

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Summary

Réseau Culturel SANGWA is located in Rwanda and is made up of Muslim, Christian, as well as Hutu/Tutsi women. Rwandan society is severely fragmented along ethnic lines; a legacy of the violent genocide that took place in 1994. Women and children face the brunt of the effects and consequent discrimination. The women of SANGWA implement programs in two categories: arts and culture, and gender and peace. Their activities are designed to teach youth to respect individuals from different communities, and to engage adults in dialogue across religious/ethnic lines. Their work has already helped members of the community achieve reconciliation and spread the message of tolerance to others.

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1. What is the current religious/cultural/social context in the area where your CC is working?

Women from different ethnic groups must come together to attempt to move past the genocide. Many women had husbands and sons killed in the conflict. Now in Rwanda, it is prohibited to say I am Hutu or Tutsi. Women are also facing discrimination because of HIV and from being single mothers with children from being raped. They face discrimination and are denied healthcare and education. Communities often discriminate against them, seeing them as a “bad omen”, that reminds them of the atrocities.

2. Why is interfaith/intercultural bridge building needed in the area where your CC works?

People of all faiths and cultures are trying to move on from genocide. However, there is still a disconnection between different groups, and if Rwandans are going to move forward and live together in harmony bridge-building must be done. The country and soul of Rwanda cannot be rebuilt if each group/religion makes separate efforts, and this is especially true in terms of influencing youth to ensure they understand peace and do not carry forward the hatred and suspicions and discrimination that fueled the atrocities.

3. Please briefly describe the main activities or programs your CC is carrying out this year?

As women of Sangwa Cultural Network from Rwanda, our activities are divided into two domains; Culture and Arts domain, and Gender and Peace. Under the Culture and Arts domain - SANGWA Cultural Network promotes dialogue between parents and children, old and young, to build a culture of peace and wisdom, as sources for a harmonious life within families. This is done so that children grow up to respect people of diverse religious and cultural backgrounds.



4. How do you see your CC’s work improving cooperation among people of different traditions?

By virtue of existence, we are women from the Hutu and Tutsi backgrounds and also women from the different religious backgrounds especially from the Muslim, Catholic and Anglicans. Our formation was based on these diversities. As for today we never refer to one another as Tutsi or Hutu or Christian or Muslim. We are simply women of Sangwa working for everybody in our community.

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5. Between which specific religions or cultures are bridges being built?

Between Christianity and Islam, as well as Hutu and Tutsi tribes.

6. Please explain the method or strategy that your CC uses to bring together people of different cultures and faiths that would otherwise not interact or cooperate with each other.

Many youth, especially children of single mothers from the genocide, took to the streets, crime, etc. Sangwa approached them and proposed for them to participate in street drama and make some income. The women realized these underprivileged children need to be looked after, both Hutu and Tutsi. Women invite elders to talk to the children to teach them tolerance and to embrace all people irrespective of their tribe.

7. How is the work of your CC helping to prevent religiously inspired violence or transforming conflict?



The focus of the trainings being on peace and tolerance for people of all backgrounds. Additionally, the trainings are provided by women of different backgrounds, which in itself is profound. The children may be too young to fully understand discrimination, but for elders who aware of segregation this is profound.

8. What are some observations or signs you see that relations are improving between people of different faiths/cultures in the area where your CC works?

We see ourselves creating a generation of young people that is tolerant and that lives beyond the ethnic and cultural differences that had torn our communities in the past. We have also helped women to use their religious and cultural teachings to promote tolerance and reconciliation during our trainings so as to have strong cohesive communities.

9. How is your CC's work helping to achieve the mission of URI?

We are committed to working together in our diversity to promote community goodness and development for ourselves and future generations. We are also committed to promoting a culture of peace through our diverse ethnic and religious backgrounds.

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Trainings in the gender and peace domain for both women and men.