

To Love My Country Without Fear:

Evaluation of Alternatives to Violence Project Workshops
in Rwandan Resettlement Camps



Written for the Friends Peace House (*Urugo Rw'Amahoro*) and
the African Great Lakes Initiative

By Emily Higgs and Nyatomba Emmanuel



The African Great Lakes Initiative (AGLI) of the Friends Peace Teams strengthens, supports, and promotes peace activities at the grassroots level in the Great Lakes region of Africa (Burundi, Congo, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania, and Uganda). To this end, AGLI responds to requests from local religious and non-governmental organizations that focus on conflict management, peace building, trauma healing, and reconciliation. AGLI sponsors Peace Teams composed of members from local partners and the international community.

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Editorial Comment

I used to keep my enemies in my heart. After AVP I released them and forgave them. I am lighter now. Banziriraika Victoria

I find it interesting how often participants in AGLI workshops, when they reach the forgiveness exercise, comment on how much “lighter” they feel as if a heavy load has been lifted off of them. This is only one of the many pearls of wisdom one finds when workshop participants are interviewed. This report includes many other “pearls.”

Rwandan Tutsi fled to western Tanzania when the conflicts began in 1959 while Rwandan Hutu fled to Tanzania during and after the 1994 genocide. There they lived separately, very suspicious of each other as enemies from the Rwandan conflict. When forced out of Tanzania in 2006 and 2007 and made to return to Rwanda, the Rwandan Government resettled them in camps in eastern Rwanda without regard to ethnicity. Suspicious enemies were living next to each other.

This report documents the effects of thirty-one Alternative to Violence (AVP) workshops in four of the first resettlement camps. “To Love My Country without Fear” is an important report because, as far as I know, **this is the first time that AVP has been used as a conflict prevention program** to alleviate the causes of potential violence in a community. Hopefully this will be a direction that peacemaking can take—intervening before violence erupts rather than trying to restore peaceful relationships after destruction and death have occurred. One topic I find most interesting is the gut reaction of people that revenge is the “natural” response after violence has been done to them. How much of this is biological and much is cultural? If you read the findings, beginning on page 9, you will see how these AVP participants moved from “revenge” to “forgiveness.” Moreover, the result of this change is one of moving from hatred and hostility to living together in harmony; greeting and helping each other out as is natural in human relationships.

One time long ago, I saw my son Tommy, break up a fight (between two women!). Afterwards I asked him about his intervention and he claimed that people don't really want to fight, but get into confrontations where they see no way out. Therefore a calm intervener is what is needed to restore peace. Is this true of individuals? Is this true of larger communities and nations? If so, then that means that real peacemaking is intervening with dialogue, with talking, with eating together, with listening to both sides. Do we do this enough? Should we do this more often?

This report shows that it is possible even among deadly enemies. When conflicts arise we do not need to throw up our hands in despair but rather should get to work bringing the sides together.

David Zarembka

Table of Contents:

Introduction.....	4
Context and Implementing Organizations.....	6
Evaluation Methodology.....	8
Findings.....	9
Before AVP	
Transformation	
Self-confidence	
Forgiveness	
Trust	
Hope	
Violence in the Home	
Responding to Conflict	
Community Relations	
Community Building	
Role of Leaders	
The Ripple Effect	
Obstacles to Change	
Hunger and Poverty	
Just a Drop in the Lake?	
Recommendations.....	17
Conclusion.....	18
Acknowledgements.....	19

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Introduction

Fourteen years ago, Rwanda burst onto the international consciousness with its genocide of alarming scale and brevity. Nearly a million Tutsis and moderate Hutus were killed during a 100-day period starting in April of 1994, officially ending when the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) overthrew the Hutu Power government sending millions of refugees in fear of revenge killings into neighboring countries. The RPF government imprisoned one hundred thousand alleged perpetrators of genocide, and the country set about the daunting task of rebuilding a nation that was suffering from the effects of

unimaginable violence. One of the more neglected problems facing Rwanda today is the return of refugees who fled Rwanda either before or during the genocide. These individuals fall into a no-man's land of terminology—they are not internally displaced persons as they have no “homes” to return to in Rwanda. Yet they are also not technically refugees since they have returned to their country of origin. These Rwandans have been placed in what we will call resettlement camps which are scattered across the country and often afflicted by extreme poverty with very few resources and a great deal of conflict. In

response to the need for inter- and intrapersonal healing in Rwanda, the Alternatives to Violence Project (AVP) spanned the country with its experiential three-day workshops on healing and conflict resolution. Since AVP's introduction to Rwanda in 2001 over five hundred workshops have been held in various communities throughout Rwanda and, recently, AVP efforts have begun to focus on the resettlement camps.

Between March 2007 and April 2008 thirty-one AVP workshops were held in four resettlement camps in eastern Rwanda. In an effort to

evaluate the impact of these workshops fifty-nine men and women who participated in, facilitated or were affected by the workshops in these camps were interviewed. The response was unanimous: bring us more AVP. Send it to our husbands, our wives, our children, and our neighbors. Bring AVP into every school so our children can grow up knowing its lessons, because, as one AVP facilitator said, *“If every Rwandan citizen could participate in AVP it would help our country.”* This overwhelming appreciation of and continuing need for AVP was found everywhere we went. But why was AVP so well received? What was

it that led to such a hunger for more workshops? Are there challenges or obstacles to the success of AVP when it comes to the specific situation of the displaced?

This evaluation seeks to understand the effect of AVP on Rwandans living in resettlement camps, what can AVP contribute in communities destroyed by lack of trust and anger and what steps can be taken in the future to ensure that the messages of nonviolence and peace are heard. As we conducted interviews and observed the effects of AVP in eastern Rwanda we began to see how AVP transforms those who experience it; producing positive change

that spreads from person to person. All over the world AVP approaches nonviolence quietly and startles its participants with the transformative lessons that challenge them to find that spark of humanity in one another, no matter how many times they may have missed it before. The genocide is far from forgotten here in Rwanda. It lives on, vividly, in the memories of the majority of the population. Taking a close look at AVP’s work—its achievements, the challenges it confronts, and its room for growth—allows us a greater comprehension of what is needed in post-conflict reconstruction and healing here in Rwanda.

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Context

Resettlement Camps: Nemba, Nasho, Ndego and Kageyo

Mass killings of Tutsis in Rwanda started as early as 1959, though conceptions of the genocide are often limited to the 100 days in 1994. With the rise in violence came a surge of refugees from all sides. This report focuses primarily upon those who fled, or were sent to, Tanzania. As thousands of Rwandan refugees from 1959 began new lives in Tanzania they obtained land and cows, started families, raised children, held jobs, and many were even granted citizenship. In 1994 there were two more waves of refugees who settled in various communities throughout Tanzania: Tutsis and moderate Hutus fleeing during the genocide, and Hutus who fled following the genocide in fear of revenge killings.

In 1994, as Tanzanians learned of the genocide in Rwanda and the influx of refugees, they concluded these Rwandans were perpetrators of genocide trying to escape RPF revenge killings. The Tanzanians made no distinction between the refugees from 1959 and 1994 and suddenly turned on anyone who was,

or ever had been, Rwandan. In 2006 Rwandans were chased out of Tanzania and those who did not flee fast enough were beaten or killed. Most were forced to leave all of their belongings and property behind and some even had to leave without children or family members who were not home at the moment of forced removal. The Tanzanians responsible for chasing out their neighbors appropriated everything left behind indicating, perhaps, that land shortages and poverty also contributed to the suddenness and ferocity with which the removal was carried out. The majority of these refugees—some of whom identified as Rwandan, but many of whom identified as Tanzanian—fled to a camp in northeastern Rwanda called Kiyanzi. Soon after their arrival the Rwandan government came and dispersed the families to many different resettlement camps in eastern Rwanda. This report evaluates the camps of Nemba, Nasho, Ndego and Kageyo.

These camps became home to a diverse mix of people—Tutsis who

had fled in 1959, Tutsis who had fled after 1959 but before 1994, and Tutsis who had come to Tanzania in 1994 during the genocide, and, Hutus who had fled in 1994 both during and after the genocide (immediately viewed as *genocidaires*, or perpetrators of genocide, by those who had fled earlier). There were those who had been born in Tanzania and did not identify as Rwandan, and there were those who longed to return to their homeland of Rwanda but could not because of the war. Each of these groups distrusted the others. Further complicating these confusing group dynamics, the camps were established in places where Rwandans already lived, or, neighboring Rwandans were brought to the camps to teach the newly returned refugees how to farm, how to speak Kinyarwanda, and simply, how to survive. Many of those returning from Tanzania believed anyone who had stayed in Rwanda was a killer, and thus had great fear of their Rwandan neighbors. Those who had stayed in Rwanda were bitter towards



Participants in an AVP workshop in Gisenyi

those who had left and did not trust them. Predictably, the conflict born out of such diversity divided the individuals and communities in the camps. Families kept to themselves, avoided neighbors, and there was constant conflict and violence in the camps. These camps are also located in extreme isolation—far from major towns and barely accessible via bad and unmarked roads. This was the situation plaguing these four camps in 2007 when AVP arrived.

Alternatives to Violence Project (AVP)

The Alternatives to Violence Project (AVP) was founded in 1975 when a group of inmates near New York City asked a local Quaker group to provide them with nonviolence training. AVP is now an international volunteer movement dedicated to teaching community building, mediation, and leadership skills through experiential workshops. During three-day workshops, AVP focuses on the following themes:

- Seeking that which is good in ourselves and others;
- Cooperation;
- Community building skills: trust, respect and inclusiveness;
- Communication skills: active/deep listening, speaking with clarity, and responsibility;
- Conflict Transformation.

Each workshop aims to teach on three levels: the heart or emotional level, the head or intellectual level, and the hand or practical level. The content of each workshop is drawn from the participants' own lives acknowledging that participants are the experts about what is needed in their own communities.

There are three levels of AVP training: Basic, Advanced, and Training for Facilitators. The Basic workshop provides an initial introduction to the concepts outlined above. The Advanced workshop allows participants to choose the thematic focus of the workshops (e.g. fear, anger, forgiveness, or domestic violence). Training for Facilitators teaches participants the skills needed to lead workshops.

Implementing Organizations

The Alternatives to Violence Project—Rwanda was established as a joint project of Rwanda Yearly Meeting of Friends (RYM) and the African Great Lakes Initiative (AGLI) of the Friends Peace Teams. The African Great Lakes Initiative strengthens, supports and promotes peace activities at the grassroots level in the Great Lakes region of Africa. To this end, AGLI

Findings:

Before AVP: *“We Had Wounds in Our Hearts”
Hatred, Revenge, Fear and Trauma*

Transformation: *We Saw the “Impossible
Become Possible”*

Self-Confidence: *“I am also Somebody”*

Forgiveness: *“I am Lighter Now”*

Trust: *“Our Children Can Play Together”*

Hope: *“There are Good Things in my Future”*

responds to requests from local religious and nongovernmental organizations that focus on conflict management, peacebuilding, trauma healing, and reconciliation. AGLI is an initiative created by the Friends Peace Teams, an organization consisting of sixteen Quaker Yearly Meetings in the United States who have united to support the traditional emphasis of Quakers in promoting a more peaceful world. Since its inception in 1999, AGLI has worked with the people of the Great Lakes region on a wide variety of projects ranging from international volunteer efforts to the creation of AVP programs in Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda and the Congo, to the introduction of healing work in Burundi, Rwanda, Uganda and the Congo.

AVP is coordinated and administered by Rwanda Yearly Meeting's Friends Peace House (*Urugo Rw'Amahoro*), which was founded in 2000 with three primary goals in its mission statement: 1) to build a sustainable and durable peace in Rwanda; 2) to restore the relationships that were destroyed by the war and genocide to ensure peaceful co-existence; and, 3) to reintegrate the people who were harmed by the tragic events of this country. Friends Peace House works primarily with women, widows, children and youth, genocide survivors, prisoners, community and religious leaders, and other grassroots organizations.

AVP-Rwanda is administered by a nine-member committee and has 73 active facilitators throughout Rwanda. Since 2001 they have organized over 500 workshops around the country. A total of 31 workshops were held in these four resettlement camps in the east and a total of 560 individuals participated between March 2007 and April 2008. Six additional workshops are planned for another resettlement village.

Evaluation Methodology

Over the course of one week in June 2008 we—Emily Higgs and Pastor Nyatomba Emmanuel—traveled to the three camps of Nemba, Ndego and Kageyo to meet with participants and leaders. We interviewed 59 individuals, including seven AVP facilitators in Kigali, in an effort to evaluate AVP’s impact on the individuals and life in the camp. We chose individual interviews as our primary approach because this allowed us to hear personal testimony and ask follow-up questions for clarification. We also included group discussion wherever possible.

Individuals to be interviewed were selected by the leaders at each camp. With the help of FPH an individual leader in each camp was notified of our arrival plans and the AVP group to be interviewed was always gathered and ready for us when we arrived. In each camp we were able to interview an impressive group with varied and diverse backgrounds. We conducted no interviews in Nasho due to previously scheduled events there on the day we had planned to visit. Also, many of the AVP participants in Nasho had since left the camp and moved to other resettlement areas.

With one exception, the interviews were conducted via translation. The questions were translated into Kinyarwanda and the responses translated back into English and recorded by hand. After each round of interviews we discussed how to elicit thorough responses and fine-tune our questions to delve more deeply into the issues with each

individual. Despite Pastor Emmanuel’s skills there are always limitations and challenges presented by translation. Certain nuances, not to mention the character and spirit of each language, are lost in the gap between translation and understanding. In an effort to minimize the loss of accurate translation we would often ask the interviewee to pause in between thoughts or sentences, so the translation would be as close to the speaker’s intention as possible and not just a summary. All of the quotations used in this evaluation appear exactly as they have been translated, though some have been edited slightly for grammar to make sure the message is clearly understood.

Access to the camps, bad roads and the distance between Kigali and

each camp, negatively affected the amount of time we were able to spend at each. Consequently we were unable to spend as much time with each individual as we would have liked. However, the similarity of the responses at each camp indicates that we were getting responses that struck to the heart of the issues. We would have liked to interview more non-AVP participants in an effort to see if they had noticed any change in the camps. We were able to interview only one non-participant, a leader in Nemba, who was very attuned to the effects of AVP in the camp. Interviewing family and friends of AVP participants would also have been helpful, not only in verifying the responses we got from those we interviewed, but to understand the broader ripple effects of AVP in each place.



Authors Emily Higgs and Nyatomba Emmanuel

Findings

Six major conclusions are identified from our interviews and observations. We begin with life before AVP, in the words of those interviewed, and how each individual felt towards others prior to the workshops. Then we explore the theme of transformation—the most inspiring and powerful testament of AVP—and the various ways in which participants felt change in their lives. Next we look at specific lessons from AVP which participants report using in response to conflict in the camps. We then explore how overall community relations were affected by the presence of AVP in each camp, and how AVP produces a “ripple effect” which contributes to community transformation. Finally we consider obstacles that challenge AVP in these areas.

A. Before AVP: “We Had Wounds in Our Hearts”

Hatred, Revenge, Fear and Trauma

“Our hearts were hurt because of the situation. We had wounds in our hearts,” said Nyirabatesi Donata, a participant in Ndego. Her words express the physicality of the emotional pain suffered by Donata and others in the camps. The majority of the people we spoke with reported having feelings of anger, hatred, fear, a desire for revenge, or the effects of trauma at some point in their lives. The unimaginable experience of witnessing and surviving genocide, or being violently chased from your home by people once considered friends is something that can sap the ability to feel love from one’s heart. Such violent pasts can haunt an individual—and the darkness of doubt, fear and worry drowns out the light of hope, friendship and compassion.

People we spoke with in Nemba, Ndego and Kageyo often recounted the extreme fear or hatred they had felt upon arriving in Rwanda. *“I had a lot of fear in my heart. I thought the Rwandans here would kill us, or that the Tanzanians would come here to kill us too,”* said Musabwe Maria, a participant in Nemba. Another participant, Mukanyangezi Aderita, who was forced to leave her children behind when she fled Tanzania, said, *“I knew that if I had a gun, I could go kill them. I had everything there, and I left everything when they chased us. It is impossible to love after that.”*

Still others harbored deep resentment and sought revenge against those who had inflicted such pain: *“Before AVP came here to train us, we hated those people who chased us and we prayed to God that they would be hurt like they had hurt us.”* These kinds of feelings are like infections that eat away at a person, and for some, slowly destroy any hope for something better to come.

B. Transformation:

We Saw the “Impossible Become Possible”

Every person we interviewed told us that AVP helped banish or at least alleviate these feelings of fear or hatred. AVP acted as a metaphorical balm of sorts for these ‘wounded hearts,’ aiding a transformation in which *“we have seen what we thought was impossible become possible,”* in the words of one participant from Kageyo. Another participant marveled, *“you can see this change!”* From the impossible to the possible, and the possible being visible healing and peace, is nothing short of miraculous to many with whom we spoke. In this section we will explore the various levels of transformation that participants, leaders and facilitators touched upon, and how they intertwine to build something much stronger than each individual strand—a more peaceful and nonviolent community.

Self-Confidence: “I am also Somebody”

That there is something good within each of us is a fundamental belief that informs each and every activity of AVP. Those who truly understand nonviolence realize the immense amount of courage and self-respect that things like forgiveness, patience, trust, hope and communication require. For this reason, we have begun with the most fundamental requirement for nonviolence: self-confidence.

AVP has done a lot. Before AVP I couldn’t stand in front of people and teach them. I had a complex where I couldn’t be in front of people. After AVP, I came to realize that I am also somebody. Now, people even call me to teach them about violence and nonviolence.

Nyiraneza Mary, Ndego

An AVP facilitator and genocide survivor, Solange, acknowledged that “AVP helped me a lot, because I was able to stay with people and I came to know my ability—what I can do, what I am capable of.” Trauma and violence can shatter a person’s sense of self and perception of self-worth. To regain such knowledge and respect of self is an enormous leap forward in the process of rebuilding and the ability to be nonviolent.

With self-confidence and self-awareness comes the ability to admit when one has done wrong. There is a sense of responsibility inherent to self-respect and taking responsibility for one’s actions is another integral part of healing and moving forward. We encountered awareness of the importance of humility and accountability in many interviews, like the following.

that journey for themselves. AVP encourages participants to recognize that spark of him or herself in another who has wronged them. Thus, by promoting empathy and understanding, AVP gently shows the power of forgiveness and the great good that can be released by learning to let go of anger. AVP does not push forgiveness on its participants. Rather it lays a strong foundation from which those who decide they are ready for and desirous of that path can take the first steps for themselves.

I hated the people in Tanzania. Because I was here [in Rwanda] during the genocide, I saw the same things happening in both countries. I hated both places and was traumatized by what I saw. I am a genocide survivor. AVP has done a lot because I am a genocide survivor. They killed my

killed my family. But then I came to Nemba and took the AVP training—it was there that I learned to forgive. Now, when I go to Gitarama, where I used to live, I am able to talk with those people who killed my family. This is because of AVP.

Mukakibibi Patricia, Nemba

In Tanzania, there was somebody who put me in prison. I was tortured there. After AVP I was able to forgive in my heart and I hope to go back to Tanzania and tell this man that he is forgiven.

Ndabarasa Stephen, Nemba

There is a great change in my life because of AVP. Before, I had my enemies who I could not greet because we had so much hatred. Now I was able to forgive them and we can be together now.

Nzamura Imana, Ndego

Before AVP, I had a spirit of rejection in me. I felt that I was a nobody. But now I feel that I am somebody because of AVP. After AVP, I knew how to forgive and how to humble myself. Now I can apologize for my sins. A lot changed in my life. In short, before AVP, when I made a mistake I wouldn’t believe that I had done it. But after AVP, when I wrong somebody, I am able to go and say, “I’m sorry, please forgive me,” to that person.

Niyonteze Helen, Kageyo



I used to keep my enemies in my heart. After AVP I released them and forgave them. I am lighter now.

Banziriraiki Victoria, Ndego

During our interviews we met no one who admitted to having an inability or reluctance to forgive. This doesn’t mean there aren’t many people who have not reached a place in which forgiveness is possible or even desirable. Healing begins with small steps and, ultimately, forgiveness can be the one thing standing between an individual and being able to let go of the pain that holds them captive. We recognize the difficulty and pain that forgiveness can cause but, as Victoria described it, also the power and ‘lightness’ it can bring us. AVP has clearly played a major role in revealing the value of forgiveness as well as a way to begin the process.

Forgiveness: “I am Lighter Now”
Forgiveness is an intensely individual process and there are endless ways to attempt to define or describe it. Though forgiveness is a constant and on-going process it is sometimes necessary to help individuals begin

family. When I went to Tanzania, I thought, “at least I am away from the people who killed my family.” But then I saw the same things happening there. I was afraid to come back to Rwanda and have to see the people who

Trust: “Our Children Can Play Together”

One of the most immediate effects of violence like that experienced in Rwanda is the destruction of trust and the construction of barriers between individuals. During the genocide neighbors killed neighbors, families were torn apart, pastors murdered their congregations, parents killed children, friends turned on one another, and no one was spared the wounds of betrayal. The result is hardly surprising: many people in Rwanda came away from the genocide believing that no one could be trusted as people are inherently “evil”. Almost everyone we spoke with referred to the lack of trust existing in each camp and the negative effects this had upon daily life and the ability to feel at home in one’s community. Through cooperative games, personal sharing, listening activities, and trust exercises, AVP creates a space in which participants are asked to find and honor the good in themselves and others.

The first thing that changed was that I used to hate those people who killed in the genocide. I could not share or eat with them. But now sometimes we are together and I can share drinks with people who have killed. That is because of AVP. AVP has done a lot, mostly because all of us hated each other here in Nemba—those people who came from Tanzania and those who were already here. Now we don’t hate each other anymore.

Rutagarama Innocent, Nemba

(Note: the sharing of food and drink in Rwanda is a very significant indication of trust, especially since there was a great fear of poisoning during and after the war.)

You see, we were born in Tanzania even if we are Rwandan, so we had problems with the people who were here before. Now, after AVP, we can share. I know my neighbors here and

our children can play together. There is some trust now.

Nenarand Mwineza, Nemba

AVP has done a lot for me. Before AVP I feared the people in Rwanda, and I also feared the people from other districts. But now there is trust. Right now, my children are with my neighbor so that I could be here.

Mukasine Immerida, Nemba

The establishment, or reestablishment, of trust is an essential part of every AVP workshop AVP seeks to help participants feel at ease with one another by including basic community building exercises. A sense of trust emerges within the shared experience of participants as each learns the skills to be nonviolent. The testimony we heard from participants indicates that AVP has done a great deal to reestablish trust within a community where trust has long been missing.

Hope: “There are Good Things in my Future”

When violence is normalized in any society hope is one of the first casualties. The constant struggle to cope with fear, anger, grief, trauma, anxiety and practical concerns like poverty and hunger can produce hopelessness and desperation. Believing that there is some reason to continue living is a necessary part of healing. Many individuals we interviewed spoke of the AVP lesson of “expecting the best” as a life-changing moment for them.

There was a great change in my life. Before AVP I used to have no hope of living—I was expecting to die. But after AVP, and the 12 guides to Transforming Power, I learned to “expect the best” and now I have faith that there are good things in my future.

Mbabazi Vanisi, Kageyo

I was born in Tanzania, my parents went there in 1959. We came here recently, chased by Tanzanians who said we were not citizens. Before that, we had considered ourselves Tanzanians and we even had citizenship. Then they took our property, beat us, and chased us away. We came here without anything—we left everything behind. Before we got AVP workshops here, we had anger about what they had done to us. Some people here were even planning to commit suicide because they were poor and could not provide for their children—they had nothing and were worried about how they could survive in this country. Another problem we had was that we all came from different parts of Tanzania, so we all had different habits and then lots of disagreements. Then we had the AVP workshops. Other kinds of workshops had come here before, but AVP was different and more special than the rest. Transforming Power taught us to stay together in one accord. We are very poor here, but AVP has helped us survive. I was totally changed and transformed by AVP. I am now patient with the problems in my life. I was able to forgive those who did wrong to me, and live with others. I was changed, thanks to AVP.

Nyiramwongi Jane, Ndego

AVP helped me a lot. AVP taught me how to be patient—that good things will come in the future. Before AVP I didn’t believe anything good would happen. I had no love in my heart before AVP, but now I do.

Mwabutenure Enoch, Kageyo

Violence in the Home: “Now It Is Quiet At Night”

Rwanda suffers from a high rate of domestic violence, a common aftereffect of trauma following war. Though addressing the problem of domestic violence is not an explicit part of AVP we found that AVP workshops alleviated this issue in many homes throughout the camps. Needless to say, this is an extremely beneficial and appreciated outcome of the AVP experience for many participants. AVP teaches patience, listening and good communication skills. As a result of these skills many husbands and wives reported a great change in their ability to respond positively to one another. As one participant thankfully noted, “*Before, at night, you could hear all the shouting of people fighting. Now it is quiet at night.*”

In my family, with my wife, when I would come home and find something not good in my house, then I would start arguing and beating her. I would give orders, “I don’t like this,” or “I don’t like that.” But now, because I am totally changed by AVP, when I find something wrong, I can do it myself—I can sweep the house without giving orders. Now I can talk with my wife.

— Mudaheramwa Cyprien, Nemba

For me, AVP has helped me so much. For example, my wife, if she did something bad, I would chase her back to her home. But after AVP, after the lesson on Transforming Power, I know that even if someone does something bad, I know there is an alternative.

Ndabarasa Stephen, Nemba

Before AVP here, people were fighting every night. Men fighting with their wives, drunks fighting with everyone. When people came from Tanzania, we saw women and men fighting as a part of the culture here. Now, after AVP, we learned to not fight anymore.

Mutumwinka Domitira, Nemba

It is sometimes said that peace starts in the home. Wherever peace begins, there is no doubt that ending violence in homes is a crucial step in promoting nonviolence in communities. Negative domestic interactions contribute mightily toward inculcating violence as normal in the minds of young children. The emphasis upon equality and respect for others in AVP directly discourages intimate violence. By supporting positive behaviors AVP appears to be successfully ending domestic violence in these four camps.



C. Responding to Conflict: Constructive Responses

Putting the Lessons of AVP into Everyday Life

AVP was created to introduce participants to the power of nonviolence through experiential learning. Throughout the workshop participants are given tools they need to develop self-confidence, trust, community, and good conflict resolution skills. The skills are taught through exercises that relate nonviolence to everyday life and demonstrate the applicable nature of each. AVP’s core is the lesson of Transforming Power—that each of us has, and will always have: the power to transform any violent or destructive situation into a more positive and liberating experience for everyone involved. The underlying lesson of Transforming Power is that conflict is a necessary and unavoidable part of life. What matters is how we respond to conflict and whether we can remain open to that power to transform ourselves and others. The practical and unforgettable nature of AVP ensures that participants apply the lessons from each workshop to their daily lives.

Before AVP I hated those people who killed in genocide. I felt that if I could get a gun I would go back and shoot them all. The government used those people who killed during the genocide to build Nemba. They would come to me for water and I would refuse them. Now, after AVP, I give water to those men and it surprises them. Also I would quarrel with my husband and then afterwards sit and do nothing for him because I was angry. Now I know how to talk to my husband, and I get along with my neighbors. Before AVP, I never used to care for others. But now I do.

Uwababyiyi Kolotirisa, Nemba

Before AVP workshops any problem would go to the police or government leaders. Now we can solve the conflicts ourselves. Even the government is wondering why they don’t hear from us as much anymore.

Nenarand Mwineza, Nemba

AVP has done a lot on my behalf. I used to respond immediately if you did something to me. I didn't think before reacting, but now I do. Even my family has noticed and felt the change.

Mukimbiri John, Nemba

What changed me most was the lesson of how you can solve one problem without causing another. Now I am able to solve conflicts without causing more. I am now a peacemaker. When I see people fighting, I am able to resolve it and I am willing to do that. I am a peacemaker. Now many people here don't go to the government if they have a problem. Now they solve it themselves by asking for forgiveness. Life here has really changed.

Uwimana Marcelline, Ndego

Immediately after AVP I was totally changed. A neighbor brought his cows here and they ate our garden. Rather than report him to the government, we resolved the problem on our own. I couldn't have done that before AVP. I was able to be patient. That's why I say AVP has transformed me.

Nyiramutombo Costance, Ndego

There was change in my heart. Before AVP I could not get along with my husband or my neighbors. But after learning about the 12 guides to Transforming Power, I have learned how to make peace.

Mukagihomo Pennina, Kageyo

One of the most important aspects of Transforming Power is the concept that one has to be *open* to it—transformation of conflict is not something one can just will to happen. It is the miraculous change that startles, that touches the heart, and, that comes through us from something greater than us. One

participant, Bateta Pennina, told us proudly, “I used to have a quick hatred if you did something wrong to me. But after the lesson on Transforming Power, I try to stay open to peace instead of fighting.”

This is a powerful example of the deeply moving change AVP can inspire in those who have never known that there is *always* an alternative to violence. To be open to peace is something towards which we must all continue to strive.

D. Community Relations

Community Building

As self-confidence, trust and hope are restored, so too are communities. Through ice breakers, games and much laughing together AVP introduces participants to the idea that we are all community builders. Creating a close-knit community has many positive implications as community is often the web that not only gives a sense of value to daily life, but is also where many find and give support in times of difficulty or celebration. As we spoke with participants in the three resettlement camps we heard many stories about an increased sense of community and friendship after the AVP workshops.

AVP is the first organization that came to teach us. Others came to give us food or whatever, but no workshops. Because we had 20 people in AVP, those 20 people trusted each other and became like family—working together and trusting each other. Because we had unity with those in the workshops we started to go to those we met in Rwanda and make friends. Before AVP there was a barrier and after there was not.

Mudaheramwa Cyprien, Nemba

After what happened here in 1994 I didn't know we could have friendship and stay in peace with people here. Still, I wanted peace

because we had nowhere else to go. After AVP we came to realize that everything is possible.

Ndabarasa Stephen, Nemba

I was really changed because before we were not happy with how they mixed us up. Before AVP we would separate ourselves from one another. One group is there and another group is over there. But after AVP we came to realize that we are the same people—we are all the same. AVP has done a lot here.

Nyabutono Irora, Ndego

What AVP has done most for us is that the group that took AVP has stayed close and we are friends. We came together learning about violence and nonviolence.

Karibwende James, Kageyo

Bihoyiki Joseph, one of the facilitators in Ndego, told a powerful story that he heard about following the AVP workshop there:

There is one story in particular I wish to share: there was one person who participated in our AVP workshop, he was sick and he wasn't able to go to the doctor. After the workshop, they all contributed the money for him to go the hospital. After that, the participants said, “This person was going to die among us and we weren't going to help him because we had no love. But after AVP we are now able to help each other.”

In these camps, where simply surviving proves difficult, a sense of community and the sense of responsibility to one another that

accompanies it is a huge step forward. The ability and willingness to lend a hand, to care, to love, and to support is not an easy thing in communities that have been destroyed by violence. Yet AVP constantly and subtly impels participants to, as Irora said so eloquently, realize that ‘we are all the same.’ The lack of a sense of community before AVP was one of the strongest themes we heard emerging from every round of interviews. That AVP has done so much to help build community in these camps is indicative of the wealth of change AVP has to offer wherever it goes.

Role of Leaders

Each camp we visited had made an effort to include as many of its leaders as possible in each AVP workshop. This is important because it is the leaders who are generally responsible for handling the every day conflicts that arise in each camp. To have leaders capable of handling problems constructively and nonviolently is significant because it not only resolves conflicts, but it sets a positive example for all involved. Good governance is a key part of sustainable peacebuilding, as responsible and communicative leaders set vital precedents for governance and leadership in the future.

I am a leader in this camp. I learned lessons from AVP like listening and the alternatives there are to violence. So now the way that I receive and approach people has changed. I am changed in my heart and I am able to change others. As a leader, I can see AVP has done a lot. Before the workshops, we used to fear each other. But now, we have

unity and we share everything together!

Mukakibibi Patricia, Nemba

I am a leader here, and I was braced for what I would hear. I was changed because of AVP in my home and now I can lead with the lessons I learned in AVP. Now my family is changed. When we have conflict we think back to the lesson of the Tree of Violence and the Tree of Peace. Also, because I am a leader, I am now capable of solving all the problems people bring to me. As I use what AVP taught me, it helps me and it helps this community.

Uwimana Charles, Ndego

The additional benefit of including the leaders in these workshops is that the decision-making process in the camps is positively affected by their ability to call upon AVP lessons to guide others.

I am a leader here in Kageyo, and even though I was a leader before AVP, AVP has really helped me learn how to be a better leader and to help people. Before AVP I used to help people as a leader—but I would help one side and bring more problems to the other side. Now I know how to address both sides of a conflict. I was totally changed. Now people call me when they have conflicts because they know I’ll solve them. Many of us were leaders who got AVP. It has helped Kageyo because now when we have meetings here, we use the 12 guides to Transforming Power.

Kadigori George, Kageyo

E. The Ripple Effect

One of the more significant aspects of AVP is that it seems to positively

affect people in the community who did not participate in a workshop. AVP has an amazing ripple effect through which its lessons ignite a powerful chain reaction spreading from individuals, to families, to neighbors, to entire communities. Many participants we interviewed expressed their desire to spread the messages of nonviolence that had moved them so mightily to their friends and neighbors who had not experienced AVP. Beyond the active act of teaching others, many indicated that their own changed behavior had an effect on those around them.

I used to hate people, especially those who killed during the genocide here in Rwanda. Now I love them, I even go to them and teach them about AVP. I hope they can be changed in their hearts also.

Musabwe Maria, Nemba

After AVP I felt that I was changed in my heart, and I am able to help those who have not seen the truth of AVP.

Karibwende James, Kageyo

There is a great change because those who got AVP taught their neighbors about violence and nonviolence, and it has had a great effect. The 12 guides to Transforming Power is like a Bible and we use it to help others.

Wamurera Flora, Kageyo

Before AVP I used to quarrel with my husband. Now it is changed. When he comes to quarrel I humble myself and he has learned the lessons of violence and nonviolence from my changed actions. Now he too is changed.

Mukashema Vestian, Kageyo

One of the AVP facilitators, Akayesu Joyce, gave her thanks to AVP and articulated this same dissemination of change:

Thank you to AVP: they trained us and we are now training others. Wherever we go, they ask us to come back. “Come back,” they say, “and let our families know about AVP”. AVP is very important and has helped many Rwandese.

F. Obstacles Confronting AVP

Hunger and Poverty

As we witnessed the overwhelmingly positive effect AVP seems to have had on these resettlement camps, we received no criticism of the AVP program. This lack of criticism could in part be attributed to a cultural reluctance to offer critique, but additionally to the drastic and challenging situation facing those in the resettlement camps. For those who have so little, it may seem unthinkable to criticize one of the few programs that came to help.

However, we did confront a number of obstacles that are keeping AVP from achieving its full potential in these communities. Hunger and poverty are two conditions outside the control of AVP, but absolutely tied to its success. The majority of people in these four camps came to Rwanda without any possessions having left all of their belongings

behind in Tanzania. The government aided the returning refugees in building homes, but the poverty that resulted from their displacement has yet to be alleviated.

In addition to poverty we found that hunger was the most pressing and overwhelming problem, particularly in Ndego. Ndego is located in the northeastern part of Rwanda, right along the Tanzanian border and suffers from extreme drought, unrelenting sun, and game animals from Akagera National Park that come and eat what few crops people do manage to grow in such unforgiving conditions. The leaders in Ndego told us that there has been no yield from their harvest in three seasons and that people in the camp are starving. One participant in Ndego, Nyiramutombo Costance, gave us the clearest picture of their problem and the greatest obstacle

confronting the ability of AVP to inspire change:

We went to Tanzania in 1961 when I was very young. Most of us Rwandans went to a camp in Tanzani, and after receiving some help here, we all went to different parts of that country. Then we became citizens of Tanzania. We had our own land, cows and goats. We were richer than most of the Tanzanians around us so they started hating us, saying that we had to leave. Every year we gave bribes to our neighbors so they would let us stay. Then some of the younger boys started wanting to come back to Rwanda. In 2004 many people from Tanzania came to Rwanda by themselves because they could. Then those of us who remained behind were forced to come here to a camp called Kiyanzi because our neighbors chased us out of Tanzania. After Kiyanzi, the Rwandan government brought us here to Ndego. They tried to help us, but we are still hungry and poor. We have no grain and it is very dry here. We survive because our children sell firewood to the villages around here. But this means that our children are not going to school.

Rwanda is good, it is our homeland, but you cannot stay someplace where you cannot eat. After we came here from Tanzani, we developed our hatred—those people were our enemies. I left my older children in Tanzania because they were in the bush looking for cattle. My young ones



Rwandan students from a resettlement village

were always hungry and that brought anger into my heart. My children are good in school, but they are unable to continue school here. When you see your children suffering and you used to have the resources to help them it brings hatred into your heart.

Nyiramutombo Costance, Ndego

Other participants echoed similar struggles. The overarching theme was that where there is hunger, there would be anger and fighting. Nyiraneza Mary, a 32 year-old participant with three children in Ndego, sadly informed us that, “We are peaceful today, but because of drought and poverty, it seems nothing will work. If people are hungry they will fight each other.” Another participant with nine children gave us a similar testimony, saying, “When we were in Tanzania, we had everything. But here, we cannot care for our children. It is not enough to be in your own country.” If hunger and poverty preclude peace, what role can AVP fill? In part, planting the seeds and lessons of nonviolence is

important in and of itself. However, perhaps we must expand the reach of AVP to include the alleviation of these broader issues that threaten the stability of any peace established.

Just a Drop in the Lake?

Another issue raised by the majority of participants was how few people had experienced AVP in comparison with the number of people living in each camp.

In reality, those who got AVP are changed. But it is just a drop in the lake—the majority is not changed. So my request is that the majority needs AVP. Please let them get these trainings so there are no bad seeds planted in this community. What I can add is, for us, we give advice to others who didn't have AVP, maybe we can all gather together to change others.

Ndabarasa Stephen, Nemba

Another participant added that the real problem is the inability of those who did get trained to continue training those around them:

In general there was a change for those who did AVP. But the majority didn't get AVP, and those that did aren't facilitators so we can't teach them. We need more workshops that can reach everyone. It could change the family, and even the society. It would be good.

Rutagambwa James, Kageyo

The impression we formed was that AVP is not “just a drop in the lake,” but still the limited number of people who were trained is far too low. Additionally, because no Training of Facilitators workshops has taken place, many individuals who received training expressed some degree of feeling static—wanting to know more and feeling unqualified to truly train others. Because of the ripple effect recounted by many participants and because many leaders referenced the great change in the entire community that they witnessed, we believe AVP is making a difference. There is no denying, however, that the more people who experience AVP, the better.



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Recommendations for the Future

Many of the participants, leaders and facilitators interviewed had valuable recommendations for the future of AVP in their communities. Some are far more achievable in the immediate future than others, but we have listed them all below.

1) Bring AVP workshops of all levels to these communities: Almost every single person we interviewed requested more workshops in some way:

I think AVP has tried by all means to help us but there is something missing. All those who got AVP are few compared to all who stay here. So for those in the majority, it does not help—we need more. My request is that AVP can come back and help everyone.

Mudaheramwa Cyprien, Nemba

In addition to adding workshops for those who have yet to experience AVP, many individuals who had taken the Basic or Advanced training expressed a desire to continue learning. One participant in Ndego, 52 year-old Nzabamwita Noheri, added, *“Please send us more workshops in a hurry. For us, we have reached the second level and we need to know what to do now.”* One of the leaders in Kageyo, Kadigori George, reiterated this same sentiment, saying:

It would be good if AVP could come back and allow us to get more knowledge to put into practice here. We would like to become facilitators so we can continue the work of AVP here. As of now, only a basic level workshop has happened here.

Kadigori George, Kageyo

One of the facilitators in Kageyo, Zainab Hamis, expressed this same need for facilitators:

The request I have for those people in Kageyo, is that AVP can take many workshops there so that they can have their own facilitators. The young ones should grow up knowing about AVP; this can only be done by having facilitators there. At least AVP has reached all over the country of Rwanda. But if possible, we need to try to make every district have its own facilitators.

Another request we heard from many individuals, women in particular, was the need for workshops aimed specifically at certain groups of people. For example the six workshops held in Ndego were almost

exclusively attended by women. Nearly every woman we interviewed echoed the same request as participant, Uwimana Marcelline, who told us: *“When AVP came here before, mostly women were trained in the workshops. Please bring AVP to the men here so that there is peace in the homes.”* In addition to workshops for men, other women requested workshops specifically for husbands and wives to attend together. Still others asked that AVP bring workshops especially for youth. There is a clear feeling that AVP can help individuals and groups of all ages, and that there is a real need for AVP on all levels.

2) Develop a permanent base for AVP in each camp: Though only two individuals we interviewed expressed this idea, it is worth noting.

We need more AVP workshops because the majority of people did not experience AVP here—they are not changed. If possible, we would like an AVP cooperative here in Kageyo; it would be a place where anyone could go to learn about violence and nonviolence. In the same way that children go to school, people would come to learn about Transforming Power.

Nkuriza Cyprien, Kageyo

In a similar vein, Niyonteze Helen, a 21 year-old participant from Kageyo, asked if it would be possible to develop a place where they *“can get materials to go teach other people who have not yet experienced AVP”*. The words of Cyprien and Helen are quite innovative and creative. Establishing a place to which anyone and everyone could go, at any time, to learn about AVP is an exciting and inspiring concept which could be as simple as using part of an already existing building in which AVP manuals and material about nonviolence would be available. There could be regular meetings to check-in with one another about challenges and successes upon the road to peace. This request connects directly to the desire to train facilitators in each camp. If Cyprien or Helen became a facilitator, Kageyo would most likely be able to develop its own permanent base for AVP because the initiative and the imagination are already there.

3) Social help: The need for food, clothing and projects to eliminate poverty was raised by almost everyone. Although addressing material needs is not explicitly part of AVP’s mandate it is still possible that AVP could help in this regard. Potentially, AVP could cooperate with other organizations working to alleviate hunger and poverty in Rwanda in order to ensure that material and emotional needs of communities are improved concurrently—one cannot be effectively improved without addressing the other. This may sound ambitious and may be a significant change to our understanding of the role of AVP, however, a holistic approach to what AVP offers communities would be well-worth the extra effort required. It is imperative that life-threatening issues like hunger, lack of health care, lack of education and poverty be addressed in order to effect sustainable change.

Akayesu Joyce, one of the AVP facilitators, offered a slightly different approach to the idea of social help, involving the simple act of visiting:

Also if possible, they need social help: giving them clothing, food if possible, and visiting them because they are alone in the camp. Even the neighbors are a bit far. They need visits so they can hear about their country, even the language we speak. If I am in here and the door is closed, I don’t get out and experience the world, it is like I am in prison. They need to be visited and feel that their community matters. They need care, because it seems like they lost love, and they are not with friends or relatives.

These three recommendations come directly from the participants and facilitators themselves and thus carry far more weight than any we could offer. The unanimous call for more AVP is encouraging and speaks to its relevance in Rwanda. Though the difficult circumstances in the camps threaten the relevance of AVP lessons, the solution is not less AVP. Rather, there must be more AVP coupled with other anti-hunger and poverty initiatives.

Conclusion

“It was after the AVP workshop that I started loving my country without fear”

said Mudaheramwa Cyprien. To be able to love Rwanda without fear, to love one’s neighbors, to forgive those who inflicted the wounds upon their hearts, and to live in peace within communities previously saturated with distrust and hatred, are impressive accomplishments. The individuals in the resettlement camps in eastern Rwanda have a unique experience of being Rwandan. Though many were not present in Rwanda in 1994, their understanding of fear and anger is no less potent and is coupled with the confusion and sorrow that accompanies displacement and loss. While this report speaks directly to the effect of AVP workshops on the resettlement camps we believe many of our findings can be

projected to reflect the impact of AVP on Rwanda in general.

“Some people say AVP came too late to Rwanda,” said facilitator Munyeragwe Epimaque, *“and others say it has come at just the right time. I agree with the second group—AVP has been very important for us.”* Regardless of timing, the fact of the matter is that AVP is here in Rwanda and there is no denying the change that AVP is bringing to communities all over Rwanda. AVP is gently taking those who have witnessed nothing but violence in their lives and leading them by the hand to a place in which those

powerful alternatives to violence not only become visible, but attainable. The most indicative proof of the success of AVP is readily seen and heard in the cries for more AVP all across the country. *“People are still hungry and thirsty for AVP,”* continued Epimaque, and from what we heard in each camp, he is quite right. AVP has visibly improved life in Nemba, Ndego, Nasho and Kageyo. There is still much work to be done in these camps, and across the country as a whole. AVP approaches nonviolence with a patience that contributes to the strength of its message. Peace will come, but it will come person by person. AVP has been, and will continue to be, inspiring hope, encouraging change, and creating a sustainable peace in a country ready for a better future.

Acknowledgements

Thank you to all the people and organizations that made this evaluation possible. First and foremost, I am indebted to Pastor Nyatomba Emmanuel, who traveled with me to each of the three camps and was not only my translator, but without whom the interviews would not have been possible. Emmanuel and I also owe deepest thanks to the 59 men and women—participants, leaders and facilitators—whose words appear in this report. Each individual gave a great deal of their time to meet with us, and we are extremely grateful for their graciousness and openness throughout the process.

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I am grateful for the funding I received from the Clarence and Lilly Pickett Endowment and from the Haverford College Center for Peace and Global Citizenship which made my time here in Rwanda possible. I would like to reiterate my gratitude to the men and women who were interviewed for this evaluation. It was humbling for me to be welcomed so warmly into their communities. I feel honored to have heard their stories and witnessed the tragedy of Rwanda through the eyes of those who have found a way to feel hope and love again. I have tried to include as many individuals as possible through direct quotation but there are some people whose voices are not directly noted here. Their thoughts, fears, hopes and requests have not gone unheard. Ultimately it is my hope that this evaluation can serve those communities by demonstrating the significance of AVP on reconciliation efforts in Rwanda and the continuing need for such peace-building efforts in the future.

Emily Higgs

Executive Summary

I hated the people in Tanzania. Because I was here [in Rwanda] during the genocide, I saw the same things happening in both countries. I hated both places and was traumatized by what I saw. I am a genocide survivor. AVP has done a lot because I am a genocide survivor. They killed my family. When I went to Tanzania, I thought, “at least I am away from the people who killed my family.” But then I saw the same things happening there. I was afraid to come back to Rwanda and have to see the people who killed my family. But then I came to Nemba and took the AVP training—it was there that I learned to forgive. Now, when I go to Gitarama, where I used to live, I am able to talk with those people who killed my family. This is because of AVP.

— Mukakibibi Patricia, Nemba

Rwanda, though continuing on the road of recovery, is challenged by the return of refugees from Western Tanzania. In an effort to address and alleviate the interpersonal conflict arising in the diverse resettlement camps set up by the Rwandan Government, the African Great Lakes Initiative of the Friends Peace Teams and the Friends Peace House (*Urugo Rw’Amahoro*), conducted thirty-one Alternatives to Violence Project (AVP) workshops in eastern Rwanda.

The resettlement camps in eastern Rwanda are comprised of returnees from Tanzania, though when and why they left Rwanda is the major factor sparking conflict in these new communities. Both Tutsi and Hutu returnees from Karagwe District of western Tanzania were placed together in these resettlement camps. The Tutsi had fled from 1959 when violence first began against them, while the Hutu fled during and after the genocide in 1994. In Tanzania they lived in separate refugee camps and many of the Tutsi felt that the Hutu could not return to Rwanda because they were implicated in the genocide. When Tanzanians forced all Rwandans to leave Tanzania and return to Rwanda, the Rwandan Government placed them together in resettlement camps in the eastern parts of Rwanda.

The Alternatives to Violence Project (AVP), an international volunteer movement dedicated to demonstrating the power of nonviolence through three-day experiential workshops that provide participants with the tools they need to respond positively to conflict. Following the thirty-one workshops in the Rwandan resettlement camps, this report was conducted as a way to evaluate the impact that AVP can have upon the specific issues at play in these displaced communities.

Through our interviews with almost sixty individuals in resettlement camps, we found that AVP had greatly contributed to the alleviation of anger and conflict in these camps, as well as increased the desire within these communities to actively seek healing and reconciliation. This report seeks to analyze how and why AVP encourages such transformation, and the immediate and long-term effects of such change. We also attempted to identify many of the challenges that AVP faces as it works against hunger, poverty and on-going resentment in resettlement camps. Ultimately we concluded that AVP may need to begin addressing both the material and emotional needs of communities that suffer from life-threatening conditions, either through coordination with other organizations or through its own initiative. A deeper understanding of what exactly AVP has to offer these displaced persons in Rwanda will help us apply the lessons and contributions of AVP more effectively in other parts of world in need of healing.

“It was after the AVP workshop that I started loving my country without fear”, said Mudaheramwa Cyprien. To be able to love Rwanda without fear, to love one’s neighbors, to forgive those who inflicted the wounds upon their hearts, and to live in peace within communities previously saturated with distrust and hatred, are impressive accomplishments.