

HOW RWANDA CHILDREN ORGANIZATION FOCUSED ON CHILDREN TO REHABILITATE RWANDA AFTER THE GENOCIDE AGAINST TUTSI

*Serge Gasore**

I. INTRODUCTION

Before the Berlin Conference, Rwanda used to be a peaceful country with one people, one country who lived in harmony under God.¹ Between the 15th of November 1884 and the 26th of February 1885, there was a conference in Germany at which the decision was made to divide African countries among the attendees for colonization purposes.² As a result of that, Rwanda ended up being a colony of Germany in 1899.³ Then, Belgium took control from Germany and became the new official colonizer

* Serge Gasore, the founder of Rwanda Children, was born in Rwanda. Serge was a child during the 1994 Rwandan Genocide against the Tutsi and barely escaped death on several occasions. Many of Serge's family members and friends died during the genocide. Serge came to the United States on a scholarship as a young adult. During this time, God restored Serge's faith and placed within him a passion for returning to Rwanda to serve children facing desperate situations. Serge's God-sized dream was to provide education and healthcare services to the children and community of Ntarama/Rwanda.

Serge completed his master's degrees in Information Technology and Global Service at Abilene Christian University. After this, he and his wife, Esperance, founded Rwanda Children, a non-profit organization that provides education, healthcare services, and hope to more than 800 children in his home village of Ntarama. The organization continues to expand its offerings in providing education and healthcare services to children and the community. Serge was honored as the 2018 Young Alumnus of the Year by his alma mater, Abilene Christian University. In 2019, Serge was awarded Rwanda's "Protectors of Friendship" medal by its First Lady. The medal is given to "persons who displayed outstanding acts of courage and humanity by protecting or rescuing thousands of Rwandans during the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi, as well as promoting unity and reconciliation among Rwandans in its aftermath." An effective leader, Serge starts by listening.

Serge is a doctoral teaching assistant and a Ph.D. student in Adult, Professional, and Community Education at Texas State University. He often travels to Rwanda to continue leading the Rwanda Children organization. He wrote a book about his life experiences entitled *My Day to Die: Running for My Life*.

¹ J.J. Kritzing, *The Rwandan Tragedy as Public Indictment of Christian Mission: Missiological Reflections of an Observer*, 24 S. AFRICAN J. MISSION STUD. 340, 346, 350 (1996); THARCISSE SEMINEGA, NO GREATER LOVE: HOW MY FAMILY SURVIVED THE GENOCIDE IN RWANDA, at app. 4 (2019).

² Richard Sheposh, *Colonization of Africa*, in SALEM PRESS ENCYCLOPEDIA (2023); Partick Gathara, *Berlin 1884: Remembering the Conference that Divided Africa*, AL JAZEERA (Nov. 15, 2019), <https://www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2019/11/15/berlin-1884-remembering-the-conference-that-divided-africa>.

³ *Brief History*, EMBASSY OF THE REPUBLIC OF RWANDA, <https://rwandaembassy.org/about-rwanda> (last visited June 1, 2024).

of Rwanda based on a mandate by the League of Nations.⁴ Upon arrival, colonizers conducted a census to divide the population into three tribes (Hutu, Twa, and Tutsi).⁵ Colonies used physical appearance to put people in a particular tribe.⁶ For example, my uncle, who experienced this, told me that they would measure people, and if the person was skinny, tall, and slim, automatically, they would be Tutsi. Hutu would be heavy, oversized, muscular, and short.⁷ As a result, Hutu became the Majority with 84%, Tutsi with 15%, and Twa 1% were the minority.⁸ These two European countries played a significant role in dividing Rwandans, a nation of people who lived together and found themselves hating each other and divided into three tribes (Hutu, Tutsi, and Twa).⁹

Hate and violence of the majority Hutu, 84% against Tutsi, 15% persisted because hatred against Tutsi kept being taught to radical Hutus country nationwide, in schools, and public and private administration offices.¹⁰ From talking to older adults in the community, it was learned that colonies believed in the divide-and-rule administration method,¹¹ which was the reason for dividing people.

II. IMPACT OF A LACK OF EDUCATION IN THE DESTRUCTION OF THE COUNTRY

This propaganda of hate and violence became too vicious, resulting in a mass killing of Tutsi around Rwanda in 1959.¹² Many Tutsi died, and many left the country and went to live in refugee camps in neighboring

⁴ *Id.*

⁵ Jerry Bergman, *The Rwandan Genocide Inspired by Darwinism: Another Tragic Result Due to Belief in Darwinism*, 16 ANSWERS RSCH. J. 253, 254 (2023).

⁶ *Id.*; ALISON DES FORGES, "LEAVE NONE TO TELL THE STORY" GENOCIDE IN RWANDA 29–30 (1999).

⁷ Bergman, *supra* note 5; Karen Krüger, *The Destruction of Faces in Rwanda 1994: Mutilation as a Mirror of Radical Ideologies*, L'EUROPE EN FORMATION, Autumn 2010, at 91, 96.

⁸ FORGES, *supra* note 6, at 29–30.

⁹ *Id.*; TOR SELLSTROM & LENNART WOHLGEMUTH, THE NORDIC AFRICAN INST., THE INTERNATIONAL RESPONSE TO CONFLICT AND GENOCIDE: LESSONS FROM THE RWANDA EXPERIENCE 10 (1996) <https://www.oecd.org/derec/unitedstates/50189653.pdf>.

¹⁰ Jean-Damascene Gasanabo, *The 1994 Genocide as Taught in Rwanda's Classrooms*, UNESCO (Jan. 6, 2017), <https://world-education-blog.org/2017/01/06/the-1994-genocide-as-taught-in-rwandas-classrooms/>; *Genocide: Ideology and Organization*, HUM. RTS. WATCH (Apr. 2006), <https://www.hrw.org/legacy/background/africa/rwanda0406/4.htm>.

¹¹ A.N. Maduegbuna, *Divide and Rule: The Bande of Effective Governance in Africa*, 10 HUMAN. & SOC. SCI. J. 81, 81 (2015) (defining the divide-and-rule administrative method as "keeping control over people by making them disagree with and fight each other, therefore not giving them the chance to unite and oppose [the government] together.").

¹² HUM. RTS. WATCH, THE RWANDAN GENOCIDE: HOW IT WAS PREPARED 3 (2006), <https://www.hrw.org/legacy/background/africa/rwanda0406/index.htm>.

countries or elsewhere.¹³ A few Tutsi who survived and chose to stay in Rwanda were abused while the government, led by a few corrupt people, was planning for a thorough killing (Genocide) that would not leave any more Tutsi alive.¹⁴ The few Hutu that were educated used their literacy to mobilize the uneducated majority of the Hutu to commit the genocide against the Tutsi.¹⁵ According to Yanagizawa-Drott, the Education of hate through media among the majority Hutu played a significant role in spreading the Genocide ideology.¹⁶ If one does not have the intellectual capacity and most of what they have been taught is division and hate, one is more likely to be involved in violence.¹⁷ For example, "Cross-country evidence indicates that when persecution of certain groups in society is made the official ideology of the elite in power, the likelihood of a conflict transitioning into political mass killings is significantly higher"¹⁸ Hence, it appeared that most Hutu did not have the intellectual capacity to analyze the propaganda of elite people and the consequences of such inhumane crimes against another person.

[E]ducation raises political awareness by exposing individuals to alternative information sources and fosters the cognitive resources to critically evaluate the validity of any given mass media source. An alternative view is that propaganda and education are complementary. That is, the effects of state-sponsored propaganda can be exacerbated if schooling instills obedience to authority, indoctrination, and acceptance of the ideology of the elites.¹⁹

Therefore, one can say that it was easy for a few people with a genocide ideology to convince other Hutus to kill Tutsi, which resulted in extremist

¹³ *Id.*; *The Rwandan Refugee Crisis: Before the Genocide: Part I*, U.S. HOLOCAUST MEM'L MUSEUM, <https://www.ushmm.org/genocide-prevention/countries/rwanda/turning-points/the-rwandan-refugee-crisis-part-i> (last visited June 2, 2024).

¹⁴ Jeremy Maron, *What led to the Genocide Against the Tutsi in Rwanda?*, CANADIAN MUSEUM FOR HUM. RTS. (June 26, 2019), <https://humanrights.ca/story/what-led-genocide-against-tutsi-rwanda>; *Rwandan Genocide*, HISTORY.COM (May 19, 2023), <https://www.history.com/topics/africa/rwandan-genocide>.

¹⁵ See David Yanagizawa-Drott, *Propaganda vs. Education: A Case Study of Hate Radio in Rwanda*, in THE OXFORD HANDBOOK OF PROPAGANDA STUDIES 378, 381–382 (Jonathan Auerbach & Russ Castronovo eds., 2013); FORGES, *supra* note 6, at 29–30 (explaining that originally colonizers restricted access to education to solely Tutsi but in the 1950s Belgium began opening access to education for some Hutus).

¹⁶ David Yanagizawa-Drott, *Propaganda and Conflict: Evidence from the Rwandan Genocide*, 129 Q.J. ECON. 1947, 1948–50, 1989 (2014).

¹⁷ *Id.* at 1950, 1989.

¹⁸ *Id.* at 1948.

¹⁹ Yanagizawa-Drott, *supra* note 15, at 378 (Jonathan Auerbach & Russ Castronovo eds., 2013).

Hutu killing over one million Tutsi people (men, women, and children) in one hundred days.²⁰

III. THE ROLE OF YOUTH IN THE GENOCIDE AGAINST TUTSI

A. *Execution of Genocide*

One thing I saw with my own eyes was the fact that youths and generally young people were used in the execution of the genocide against Tutsi.²¹ Growing up, I remember seeing young men and women being trained as a part of the Genocide against Tutsi preparation.²² For example, as a kid, when I went to fetch water, I would see young men(youth) from the road down below our neighborhood; I cannot recall their names now because I was young and they were a lot older than me, and it has been a while. These young men were carrying machetes and heading to the local government's office, where they would gather for political party meetings. These were men and women who belonged to the Militia Interahamwe group.²³ The Group, the civilian majority being Hutu youth, and the government preparing for the genocide had formed and trained for killing.²⁴ They would chant radical songs full of hate and propaganda in these meetings.²⁵ They received killing training at these meetings,²⁶ which I saw several times. These were young minds that the propagandist Government had indoctrinated.²⁷ Also, literature has recognized the role of propaganda in spreading hate;²⁸ for example, "public education provided by authoritarian regimes, like the Hutu-controlled government before the genocide, can be used as an indoctrination tool by shaping beliefs or ideology of the population in a desired direction."²⁹ Indeed, the

²⁰ *Id.* at 379–81; *Outreach Programme on the 1994 Genocide Against the Tutsi in Rwanda and the United Nations*, U.N., <https://www.un.org/en/preventgenocide/rwanda/historical-background.shtml#prior-to-colonial-era> (last visited Apr. 10, 2024).

²¹ SARA RAKITA, HUM. RTS. WATCH, LASTING WOUNDS: CONSEQUENCES OF GENOCIDE AND WAR ON RWANDA'S CHILDREN 13 (2003).

²² Maron, *supra* note 14.

²³ Nicholas Iaroslavtsev, *Interahamwe (1992–)*, BLACKPAST (Mar. 25, 2018), <https://www.blackpast.org/global-african-history/groups-organizations-global-african-history/interahamwe-1992/>.

²⁴ *Id.*; Hollie Nyseth et al., Analyzing Participation in the 1994 Genocide in Rwanda, 60 J. OF PEACE RSCH. 291, 299–301 (2023).

²⁵ See *Bikindi v. Prosecutor*, Case No. ICTR-01-72-A, Judgement, ¶¶ 16, 50, 53 (Mar. 18, 2010), https://www.haguejusticeportal.net/Docs/Court%20Documents/ICTR/Bikindi_Judgement_EN.pdf.

²⁶ See *Prosecutor v. Kambanda*, Case No. ICTR 97-23-S, Judgement and Sentence, ¶ 39(vi) (Sep. 4, 1998).

²⁷ See *id.* at ¶ 39(vi)–(vii).

²⁸ Yanagizawa–Drott, *supra* note 16 at 1948, 1956.

²⁹ *Id.* at 1986.

power of young ones was about to be wasted by being invested in killing instead of being used to build the country. Seeing how youth was used to destroy my beloved country has inspired me to become a peace advocate so that atrocities won't happen again. In the following parts of this paper, I discuss how I will teach the next sound generation of Rwandan youth who will never fall into the same problem again.

B. Ending the Genocide

However, when looking at the history of Rwanda, one would learn that the Genocide against the Tutsi was stopped by the Tutsi, who could not afford to stand and see the country being destroyed.³⁰ Most of those liberators were young people who had seen the government's injustice to Tutsi and decided to form a rebel army called Rwanda Patriotic Front (RPF-Inkotanyi) to fight against the killing Government.³¹ For example, one of my uncles, Sezibera Theogene, a Tutsi, was in high school when he decided to join the Rwanda Patriotic Front (RPF-Inkotanyi) to fight against the killing regime that the government of Juvenal Habyarimana led. Through gunfight, Theogene and his comrades stopped the genocide against Tutsi and rescued many people, including me. Theogene's heroic act as a young man shows that young people can be influential if their energy, wisdom, and patriotism are used wisely.

IV. LESSONS LEARNED AS A SURVIVOR OF THE GENOCIDE AGAINST TUTSI

Seeing how the Hutu young generation was misused to kill, and another young age stepped in to stop it, helped me realize that young people are influential if their gifts and energy are used wisely. From that, I draw encouragement to be part of the reconstruction journey of the country after the genocide against the Tutsi.

This type of encouragement brought a voice in my heart saying: If we were discriminated against, hated, and killed by our fellow Hutu who were thought to be like that by their elders, what if I can flip the page and teach children to love, care and serve each other among children of Rwanda. The importance of having children who are taught peace and unity seemed instrumental in the country's recovery because the future was going to be

³⁰ See Maron, *supra* note 14.

³¹ See Leon-Pierre Muhire, *Rwanda's Youth and Why They Follow Inkotanyi Footsteps*, THE CAMPUS (July 6, 2022), <https://www.thecampus.rw/post/view/rwandas-youth-and-why-they-follow-inkotanyi-footsteps>; *The Rwandan Patriotic Front*, HUM. RTS. WATCH, <https://www.hrw.org/reports/1999/rwanda/Geno15-8-03.htm> (last updated May 17, 2023).

made by those children growing up.³² Plus, there is a possibility that they can help change their parent's mindsets significantly if these children can grow up educated and go home and educate their parents who missed education opportunities.³³ My thoughts weren't far from the Rwandan government after the genocide as it was also more focused on rebuilding a country where all people were treated, educated, and developed the same.³⁴ For example, the Rwandan government, in its unity and reconciliation effort, has created a program called ITORERO, "a non-formal citizenship education platform meant for High School Leavers (hereafter HSLs) in post-genocide Rwanda."³⁵ This program has played a significant role in teaching Rwandans how to live together peacefully and united,³⁶ and it gives a reference as I am teaching parents and their kids.

V. FOUNDING THE RWANDA CHILDREN ORGANIZATION IN HOPES OF HELPING THE COUNTRY HEAL AND RECOVER

Although after the genocide against Tutsi, physical and psychological wounds were still fresh, and many families of perpetrators and their victims were still holding on to the anger,³⁷ I could not think of any other way to participate in the country's healing other than focusing on teaching kids of all races. At least they will grow up knowing better, and some of them would perhaps know that even if I was a victim of their family, I treated them the same as other kids, and they received equal opportunity under my leadership.

A. *Focusing on Children to Promote Lasting Healing*

Rwanda Children (RC) organization initially identified at-risk children and provided them with three meals a day, ranging from babies to 4 years old; the goal was to try and get them through the most fragile period for a child, which is seven years old in our context.³⁸ In Rwandan

³² John Rutayisire et al., *Redefining Rwanda's Future: The Role of Curriculum in Social Reconstruction*, in EDUCATION, CONFLICT & SOCIAL COHESION 315, 320–21 (Sobhi Tawil & Alexandra Harley eds., Int'l Bureau of Educ. 2004).

³³ See *id.* at 337, 345, 359.

³⁴ See *id.* at 319–20, 331, 340, 349–50, 353–54.

³⁵ S. Nzahabwanayo et al., *Identification and Critique of the Citizenship Notion Informing the Itorero Training Scheme for High School Leavers in Post-Genocide Rwanda*, 31 S. AFR. J. HIGHER EDUC. 226, 226–27 (2017).

³⁶ See Wioleta Gierszewska & Vicente C. Sinining, *Civic Education in Rwanda: The Impact of the Itorero Program*, 4 INTERCULTURAL EDUC. POL. & WORLDWIDE 43, 49–52 (2023).

³⁷ See *id.* at 53.

³⁸ See *About Rwanda Children*, RWANDA CHILD., <https://www.rwandachildren.org/about> (last visited Mar. 18, 2024); see generally Republic of Rwanda: Ministry of Education, *Early Childhood Development Policy*, 4 (2011), <https://extranet.who.int/nutrition/gina/sites/default/filesstore/RWA%202011%20>

terms, this children and caring setting would be called Early Childhood Development. RC was successful, but year after year, it was clear that these kids needed education. Because of that, Early Childhood Education was introduced to answer schooling children's need for education. At this point, the entire team at RC was trying to gear up to find solutions that children need to be cared for and protected enough. Again, that is how the idea of bringing a health post and nurse who would provide healthcare services to vulnerable children at the RC campus was introduced. Before too long, there was a health post treating kids who were beneficiaries of the organization and other kids from the community.³⁹ At this time, Rwanda's children's organization was still at its genesis.⁴⁰ Children were being given two meals on campus, proper health care and checkups, quality education, naps in absolute beds, and shown the love every child deserves every day. But something remarkable happened that required the organization to rethink its strategies and parameters of its interventions in the community.

B. *Transition to a Holistic Approach*

One would think that a typical farmer and an adult parent with a severely malnourished kid at home would keep their first eggs, ooze milk, and give them to their skinny kid, but that is not the mindset for some adult parents Rwanda Children (RC) was serving back specifically in Ntarama community a small village of 17978 population in 2012.⁴¹ Some at-risk kids in Rwanda were taken care of at that time by parents who showed surprising signs of poor attitude,⁴² which was very alarming. For example, a parent will sell produced eggs and milk from their farms and buy donuts in return, knowing very well that there is a child at home sick and lacking nutrients that could be found in eggs or milk.⁴³ That is odd,

%20Early%20childhood%20development%20policy.pdf (describing the Rwandan government's policy to help care for young children, from birth through six years old).

³⁹ See *About Rwanda Children*, *supra* note 38 (last visited Mar. 21, 2024).

⁴⁰ *Id.* (tracing the organization's beginnings in 2014 and the construction of the first medical clinic in 2016).

⁴¹ NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF STATISTICS OF RWANDA, FOURTH POPULATION AND HOUSING CENSUS, RWANDA, 2012: POPULATION SIZE, STRUCTURE, AND DISTRIBUTION 76 (Jan. 2014), <https://statistics.gov.rw/publication/rphc4-thematic-report-population-size-structure-and-distribution>; see RWANDA CHILDREN, *supra* note 38 (last visited Mar. 21, 2024).

⁴² See, e.g., Jean De La Croix Tabaro, *Careless Parents Keeping 48% Rwandan Children Stunted*, KT PRESS (Jan. 25, 2016, 12:21 PM), <https://www.ktpress.rw/2016/01/careless-parents-keeping-48-rwandan-children-stunted/>.

⁴³ See, e.g., *id.* (describing other instances of parents' poor dietary behaviors toward their children); see also David D. Weatherspoon et al., *Stunting, Food Security, Markets, and Food Policy in Rwanda*, 10–11 BMC PUBLIC HEALTH (2019) <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6610945/> (describing how Rwandan

right? It is strange as eggs and donuts cost the same at the market in that community,⁴⁴ and one egg is far more nutritious than a donut.⁴⁵ It was shocking to see this thinking among parents of kids RC was helping. The cause of this mindset is that a donut tastes much better than an egg. Second, eating donuts could be seen as a privilege, and when someone has that type of show-off they can afford, they would do that regardless.⁴⁶ Third, most of the community has no education,⁴⁷ so they do not have basic knowledge about nutrition, such as the nutrients a kid needs.⁴⁸ This lack of knowledge about food is another component we are using to educate parents, and they have made a tremendous improvement.

After noticing this poverty of mindsets among beneficiaries, RC immediately decided to turn Rwanda Children into a holistic approach organization that would transform a family as a whole, which would mean tackling all related family issues to empower and strengthen families with disadvantages. It was clear that lifting a child and leaving behind a struggling parent with a poor mindset would have defeated the purpose of the entire family transformation RC intended to make in the community, starting from child protection and education. Therefore, Rwanda Children has decided to make lasting changes in the lives of those touched by its services, and the goal is not just to meet a physical need and send people

government policies have subsidized poor dietary behaviors, creating conditions under which parents are incentivized to sell high quality nutritious foods for low quality, nutritionally substandard foods).

⁴⁴ Prudence Kwizera, *Buri Mwana Ariye Amagi Abiri Mu Cyumweru Ibibazo By'Imirire Mibi Byakemuka–Minisitiri Mukeshimana*, IGIHE (Feb. 4, 2022), <https://mobile.igihe.com/amakuru/u-rwanda/article/buri-mwana-ariye-amagi-abiri-mu-cyumweru-ibibazo-by-imirire-mibi-byakemuka> (noting the price of eggs in Rwanda between 100Frw and 150Frw); Serge Gasore, Photograph of Rwandan eggs and donuts at market both costing 100Frw (unpublished photograph) (on file with author).

⁴⁵ Marijke Vroomen Durning et al., *Health Benefits of Boiled Eggs*, WEBMD (Feb. 21, 2024), <https://www.webmd.com/diet/health-benefits-boiled-eggs>; *Doughnuts, Cake-Type, Plain (Includes Unsugared, Old-Fashioned), 1 Doughnut, Medium (3-1/4" Dia)*, UNIVERSITY HOSPITALS (last visited Mar. 22, 2024), <https://www.uhhospitals.org/health-information/health-and-wellness-library/article/nutritionfacts-v1/doughnuts-cake-type-plain-includes-unsugared-old-fashioned-1-doughnut-2>.

⁴⁶ Given Rwanda's food insecurity and malnutrition problems, purchasing donuts instead of nutritious foods, even when the two cost the same, may communicate that the purchaser is privileged with expendable financial resources. See RWANDA: NUTRITION PROFILE, USAID 1–2 (updated Feb. 2018), <https://2017-2020.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1864/Rwanda-Nutrition-Profile-Mar2018-508.pdf> (describing Rwanda's food insecurity and related poverty problem).

⁴⁷ See Habyarimana Jean de Dieu et al., *Quality Education in Rwanda: A Critical Analysis of Quality Indicators*, 27 IOSR J. HUMANS. & SOC. SCI. 52, 54, 61, 63–64 (Feb. 2022); *Rwanda: Education Country Brief*, UNESCO (Jan. 2024), <https://www.iicba.unesco.org/en/node/107>.

⁴⁸ See *Nutrition*, UNICEF RWANDA, <https://www.unicef.org/rwanda/nutrition> (last visited Apr. 3, 2024) (noting that UN interventions in the area include promoting better child nutrition education).

on their way. The vision is to make profound changes by empowering vulnerable and desperate families to break the cycle of poverty.

RC has grown and has a formal school for vulnerable kids from two years old until secondary school.⁴⁹ The school intends to add one higher level every year until it is a total of six years of high school.⁵⁰ The goal is for the school to educate at-risk children while at the same time empowering and educating their parents as a part of a holistic approach initiative that wants to see families getting stronger, educated (knowledgeable), and economically stable.⁵¹ Different models are utilized to educate and empower the adult category. For example, RC came up with the idea of creating a cooperative platform, which has become effective. Over 300 parents of RC's Early Childhood Development (ECD) parents are cultivating and growing crops on the campus.⁵² A few years ago, the ECD parents formed a cooperative (co-op) climbing to climb out of devastating poverty. Plus, they see this as a way to give back to Rwanda Children for the opportunities their kids are receiving at Rwanda Children. Now, their kids can eat the fresh vegetables grown, and the parents can sell the surplus harvest to the community. This income goes into the co-op's bank account, which is then used to provide small loans to the co-op's members. It's a win-win situation for us, our ECD kids, and their families!

VI. THE IMPACT OF RWANDA CHILDREN ON THE NTARAMA COMMUNITY

A. *Impact on Ntarama Children*

Before Rwanda Children (RC), there were already some schools for the primary level, but there were almost no schools for young kids between 2 years and four years old.⁵³ Moreover, it's not like these kids of 4 years

⁴⁹ *About Rwanda Children*, *supra* note 38; *Rwanda Children Christian School*, RWANDA CHILD., <https://www.rwandachildren.org/rwanda-children-christian-school> (last visited Apr. 3, 2024).

⁵⁰ *See Rwanda Children Christian School*, *supra* note 49, (discussing the plans to complete construction of a high school in late 2023 or early 2024); *see also* Posting of Rwanda Children, serge@rwandachildren.org, to e2ma.net (Mar. 28, 2024, 11:35 AM) (on file with author) (giving an update on construction progress and highlighting the completion of the outer structure of the school).

⁵¹ *See About Rwanda Children*, *supra* note 38.

⁵² *See id.* (noting that as of 2023 the program has created agricultural jobs for 941 people and on-campus volunteer opportunities for more than 360 parents).

⁵³ RWANDA MINISTRY OF EDUC., 2015 EDUCATION STATISTICAL YEARBOOK 16 (2016) (showing that public pre-primary schools were almost non-existent in Rwanda until 2014, creating a gap in education which was filled almost entirely by private schools).

and lower were at home and safe with their parents.⁵⁴ Instead, parents of vulnerable children from poor families would take them to the agricultural field and lay them down in a very unsanitary place.⁵⁵ As a result, kids would get sick of intestinal parasites due to dirt and foul water.⁵⁶ Also, this negatively impacted their productivity because they would leave the field early, around 10 a.m., to feed their kids when they typically prefer noon.⁵⁷ Now, with RC, kids from poor families have been helped to find a place where they leave kids so they can learn and be cared for, and as of now, there are over 700 kids, including kids from 2 to 4 years old and others from primary and secondary.⁵⁸ This platform has allowed farmers who survive off agriculture and other hard labor to maximize their time in the field, and financially, that adds because the longer they work, the higher the productivity goes.⁵⁹ On top of that, they could be guaranteed that their kids are safe and secure, which is an excellent comfort any parents should have.

B. *Impact on Adults in the Ntarama Community*

The following data describes the various adult programs that have been put into place under RC's holistic approach to empower a child and their family simultaneously.

1. Adult Literacy and Numeracy

i. PARTICIPANTS

⁵⁴ See *Early Childhood Development*, UNICEF RWANDA, <https://www.unicef.org/rwanda/early-childhood-development> (last visited Apr. 3, 2024) (“Only 1 in 5 parents in Rwanda are engaged in activities that support early learning at home, . . . More than half of children under age 2 are victims of violent discipline, and more than half of young children are left home alone during the day or in the care of an older sibling.”).

⁵⁵ See Evariste Hakizimana et al., *Intestinal Parasitic Infections among Children Aged 12–59 Months in Nyamasheke District, Rwanda*, 61 KOREAN SOC'Y PARASITOLOGY & TROPICAL MED. 304, 307 (2023) (explaining how children with parents that work on farms are more often exposed to unsanitary conditions).

⁵⁶ *Id.*

⁵⁷ See UNICEF RWANDA, SITUATION ANALYSIS OF CHILDREN IN RWANDA, 2017 at 49 (2018), <https://www.unicef.org/rwanda/media/396/file/Situation-Analysis-of-Children-in-Rwanda-Main-Report.pdf> (discussing disruptions to household labor productivity that are present in most Rwandan households).

⁵⁸ *About Rwanda Children*, *supra* note 38 (stating that 425 children are under the care of Rwanda Children, and more than 550 children are enrolled in Rwanda Children Christian School and Early Childhood Development program).

⁵⁹ See Rachel Moussié, *Childcare Services in Cities: Challenges and Emerging Solutions for Women Informal Workers and Their Children*, 33 INT'L INST. ENV'T & DEV. 117, 119–20 (2021) (explaining how the need to care for children decreases productivity and increases poverty for working women).

This program currently has 82 participants from at-risk families (79 Female and 3 Male). All of them are in the range of 20-60 years old. Some of them are parents of the kids under Rwanda Children's Care. The chart below shows the graduates from this program from 2019 at its inception to 2023.

Year	Male	Female	Total
2019	5	40	45
2020/2021	2	35	37
2022/2023	2	70	72
Total	7	75	154

ii. NOTABLE IMPACTS

There are many notable impacts from this program including:

- The program has contributed to changing the mindset of beneficiaries.
- After learning reading and writing, beneficiaries in the community are empowered with various opportunities, such as running small businesses
- Restored hope and confidence among people
- Literacy and numeracy program opened doors for those who want to pursue formal education

iii. EVOLUTION OF PROGRAM

The Adult Literacy and Numeracy program started in 2019. Since then, it has had a remarkable impact on the development of families in the community, and due to that, many people are very interested. There is an increase in the number of participants every year, and the need for this program is greatly more significant.

iv. ADVANCED TECHNOLOGY METHODS BEING USED

The program is designed to use typical standard teaching methodologies; however, if participants have mastered what they acquired in the class, they will go to the computer lab for a brief introduction to Information Communication Technology (ICT). Also, they can access some learning materials, such as online books from the school library.

v. BARRIERS TO LONG-TERM SUCCESS

Poverty and poor mindset are the leading causes preventing long-term success for most of the people who attend adult literacy and numeracy programs.⁶⁰ Many are from vulnerable families who only eat if they can go to work as casual workers.⁶¹ These simple jobs are challenging, rare, and unpredictable. Therefore, attending the program daily for one year is difficult for these families. Hence, we face many dropouts and some repeat years due to poor performance.⁶² The need is more significant on a larger scale.

2. Malnutrition

i. PARTICIPANTS

These mothers can be divided into three categories:

1. Single Mothers raising kids alone without a job or support from their respective fathers.
2. Grandmothers who are raising grandkids as their mothers deserted them
3. Women who didn't use the family planning method and got pregnant while their kids were still too young to have young siblings

Some men come to the program in most cases when a wife has deserted him and the baby right after giving birth, and now, they are the ones raising the baby by themselves. The chart below shows the graduates from this program from 2017 at its inception to 2023, based on Rwanda Children's daily data collection.

Year	Male	Female	Total
2017-2021	167	219	386
2022-2023	13	26	39
Total	180	245	425

ii. NOTABLE IMPACTS

There are many notable impacts from this program including:

⁶⁰ See Pamela Abbott et al., *Failing Adult Learners: Why Rwanda's Adult Literacy Education is Not Delivering*, 79 INT'L J. EDUC. DEV. 1, 5 (2020) (explaining that common reasons for adults not enrolling in literacy classes included not wanting to admit that they are illiterate, feeling they are too old to learn, and poverty).

⁶¹ E.g., Sam Munderere, *Helping Vulnerable Young People in Rwanda Towards A Brighter Future – Marie's Story*, SURVIVORS FUND (June 10, 2015), <https://survivors-fund.org.uk/uncategorized/ele-new-dfid-project/> (telling the story of Marie, who struggled to make ends meet as a casual worker).

⁶² See Pamela Abbott et al., *supra* note 60 at 2, 5 (“Adult literacy classes generally have a limited impact on literacy, with low enrolment, high dropout rates and low retention of learning”).

- Graduated women are very empowered and encouraged.
- Their kids are in good health conditions.
- Hope is restored among graduates
- Collaboration and socialization through their cooperatives allow them to work together to gain some income and utilize the platform to encourage each other.
- The creation of saving groups helped them to resolve some financial needs for their families.

iii. EVOLUTION OF THE PROGRAM

The malnutrition program has shown a positive change in the community from its beginning. Even facing it, there is impressive and remarkable progress even though many community members still face malnutrition problems.⁶³

The problem is categorized into two parts:

1. They are kids who suffer diseases due to poor diet, and their parents are unaware of that.⁶⁴ Instead, they blame poisons from neighbors.⁶⁵ Since Rwanda Children (RC) started the fight against malnutrition program, many parents who have gone through our program can easily differentiate illnesses due to poor diet and poison.⁶⁶

2. There are cases where parents would hide their malnourished kids, especially parents' kids with disabilities, and some of it affected the child even more.⁶⁷ Stigma is caused by a parent's guilt of having a disabled kid with malnutrition, and "[c]hildren with disabilities may also be neglected due to stigma or misinformation, which can increase their risk of malnutrition."⁶⁸ However, since these parents learned better and got equipped through the malnutrition program, there is less of a poor mindset that kept parents from taking their kids to health providers in case of sickness in the past. Now, when kids are showing malnutrition problems, parents dare to take them to the health center for treatment

⁶³ See *Nutrition*, *supra* note 48.

⁶⁴ See Sanam Roder-DeWan et al., *Four Delays of Child Mortality in Rwanda: A Mixed Methods Analysis of Verbal Social Autopsies*, *BMJ OPEN* 3 (2019) (available at <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8532704/>) (noting how caregivers often expressed surprise and confusion at their child's illness).

⁶⁵ *Id.*

⁶⁶ See generally NADINE UMUTONI ET AL., KURANEZA "FIGHT AGAINST MALNUTRITION" 2019, 5–7, 10–11 (Rwanda Children 2019) (on file with author) (discussing how to eat a balanced diet and prevent diseases like diarrhea and typhoid).

⁶⁷ See Alyssa Klein et al., *Nutritional Care for Children with Feeding Difficulties and Disabilities: A Scoping Review*, *PLOS GLOB. PUB. HEALTH* 12 (2023), <https://journals.plos.org/globalpublichealth/article?id=10.1371/journal.pgph.000113>.

⁶⁸ *Id.* at 2.

and trust professional healthcare providers more than before.⁶⁹ In the past, they would either blame poison for being the cause of their kids' sickness or they would attempt to treat illnesses with traditional medicines.⁷⁰

iv. ADVANCED TECHNOLOGY METHODS BEING USED

Rwanda Children has designed a curriculum that takes six months to be covered by every parent who attends the Fighting Against Malnutrition Program, and it contains many topics that touch on each of the challenges the community faces.⁷¹ The curriculum tends to solve the following potential causes of malnutrition:

- Illiteracy
- Conflict resolution
- Lack of proper hygiene and sanitation
- Gender-based violence
- Poor Mindset
- Lack of knowledge about how to prepare a well-balanced diet
- Lack of Family planning skills
- Unable to follow doctor's checkups and recommended schedule during pre- and post-natal consultations.
- Lack of Entrepreneurship

v. BARRIERS TO LONG-TERM SUCCESS

Problems that prevent long-term success are due to some people's religions, where some churches do not allow their people to stop giving birth, and other cultures do not accept some family planning methods.⁷² Also, the illiteracy issue is among the causes, making it harder to educate parents on many subjects, such as malnutrition.⁷³ For example, the team at RC is asking **about how to design the teaching approach and**

⁶⁹ See *Nutrition*, *supra* note 48 ("Between 2015 and 2020, rates of chronic malnutrition among children under 5 years . . . decreased from 38 per cent to 33 per cent.").

⁷⁰ See Sanam Roder-DeWan et al., *supra* note 64, at 1, 3.

⁷¹ See generally NADINE UMUTONI, *supra* note 66.

⁷² Didi Bertrand Farmer et al., *Motivations and Constraints to Family Planning: A Qualitative Study in Rwanda's Southern Kayanza District*, 3 GLOB. HEALTH: SCI. & PRAC. 242, 249 (2015) ("While some religious leaders endorsed family planning, others promoted only natural methods, and still others prohibited all family planning use.").

⁷³ *Rwanda: Chronic Malnutrition Rates Drop But Remain 'Stubbornly High,' UN-backed Study Reveals*, UN NEWS (Apr. 5, 2016), <https://news.un.org/en/story/2016/04/526032>; see also Pamela Abbott et al., *supra* note 60, at 1, 3 ("Rwanda has low levels of literacy, lacks a reading culture, and this harms people's lives and their children's educational attainment").

methods to face the varieties of these families beliefs and issues that are ending up blocking their health and development progress.

3. Teen Mothers Sewing Vocational Training Program

i. PARTICIPANTS

Currently, the program takes 25-year-olds who are the most vulnerable women and got pregnant early (teen mothers) from the community.⁷⁴ For these teen mothers, getting kids at a young age came with many responsibilities that forced them to quit school, especially since most don't have husbands.⁷⁵ This program came to help these young girls acquire another vocational training skill set that could help them escape poverty.⁷⁶ The chart below shows the graduates from this program from 2017 at its inception to 2023, based on Rwanda Children's daily data collection of the sewing program.

Year	Male	Female	Total
2017	1	23	24
2018	3	27	30
2019	13	113	126
2020	6	40	46
2021	0	25	25
2022/2023	0	25	25
Total	23	253	276

Note that the program started by welcoming everyone willing to learn sewing skills; however, since 2021, RC has focused on teen mothers as they were more at-risk. Empowering teen mothers is a call for RC because we know and understand what a teen mother goes through. Teen mothers are viewed as a problem in the community in which they live.⁷⁷ Yet, they are still young, and if they are supported through non-formal and informal

⁷⁴ See *About Rwanda Children*, *supra* note 38; see also *A Holistic Approach to Addressing Teenage Pregnancies in Rwanda*, KVINNA TILL KVINNA (May 31, 2023), <https://kvinnatillkvinna.org/2023/05/26/a-holistic-approach-to-addressing-teenage-pregnancies-in-rwanda/> (noting that many young, unmarried women who end up pregnant as teenagers are shamed and very rarely return to school).

⁷⁵ *A Holistic Approach to Addressing Teenage Pregnancies in Rwanda*, *supra* note 79.

⁷⁶ *About Rwanda Children*, *supra* note 38.

⁷⁷ *A Holistic Approach to Addressing Teenage Pregnancies in Rwanda*, *supra* note 74 (noting that families of the pregnant, unmarried women shame them and consider the child to be a burden).

education, they can contribute to their child's well-being and the development of the respective community.⁷⁸

ii. NOTABLE IMPACTS

There are many notable impacts of this program, including:

- It brings hope into the hearts of teen mothers who their families and communities have rejected.
- Sewing programs serve as a platform for integration (Social interactions)
- Its experience platform
- Offers capacity building
- Increasing self-control

iii. EVOLUTION OF THE PROGRAM

The sewing program has proven to be a remarkable empowering skill set and tool in the Ntarama Community and outside. Many facts show positive changes among the graduates from the program, such as:

- Employment
- Independence
- Sustainability and confidence
- Hope for the future
- stability and focus

iv. ADVANCED TECHNOLOGY METHODS BEING USED

- Learning by using an electronic machine
- Internship to each of the students to be exposed to the international market.
- Provision of sewing machine and tool kits to each of the graduates as their starting kit and capital
- Each of the graduates gets a certificate to prove their qualifications.

⁷⁸ Compare *About Rwanda Children*, *supra* note 38 (describing the sewing and handicraft training programs that Rwanda Children started for families to escape poverty), with *Empower Rwanda Launches Teen Mother's Support Program*, EMPOWER RWANDA (Nov. 10, 2021), <https://empowerrwanda.org/empower-rwanda-launches-teen-mothers-support-program/> (discussing how Empower Rwanda, a similar non-government organization, also launched a training program focused on helping single mothers, and highlighting how teen mothers gain life skills that they can use in their communities to save money and raise their children.).

- Annual exhibition and open house to allow the Rwanda Children team to get feedback from the community.

v. BARRIERS TO LONG-TERM SUCCESS

There are several problems, such as a lack of enough capital to compete with others in the national or international market.⁷⁹

- Lack of Knowledge about linking them up with potential employers looking for young tailors. How to put some other technological knowledge at their fingertips to give them a broader and richer experience. How can we better help them as it is not clear if how they are handled is the best way to empower them.... There was no research to find the most effective way to serve them.
- Lack of knowledge on how to increase their market even from their respective villages
- Lack of prediction about how their market will be in the future so they can better be prepared.

4. Microfinance Cooperatives:

i. PARTICIPANTS

The cooperative members are graduates from the previous Sewing and Fighting against Malnutrition programs, which combined their efforts for their shared interests and goals. Others are vulnerable parents with kids enrolled in RC's program. Through our microfinance, these parents are empowered and equipped with small micro-loans to run small businesses. The chart below shows the graduates from this program from, based on Rwanda Children's daily data collection of the family transformation program.

Category	Year	Male	Female	Total
Sewing	2017	15	126	141
Sewing	2023	0	25	25

⁷⁹ See *Women's Ministry*, CINDI'S HOPE, <https://www.cindis-hope.org/womensministry> (last visited Mar. 16, 2024) (promoting another sewing training program in Rwanda, Cindi's Hope starts costs at \$1,700 with \$700 monthly). For comparison, another source estimates that the startup costs for an online sewing business in the West starts at almost \$14,000. See Pat Walls, *How Much Does It Cost to Start a Sewing Products Business? (In 2024)*, STARTER STORY (Jan. 18, 2023), <https://www.starterstory.com/ideas/sewing-products-business/startup-costs>.

Microfinance	2017	2	48	50
Microfinance	2023	23	72	95
Total		27	284	311

ii. NOTABLE IMPACTS

The impact has been tremendous and life-transforming to the community so far:

- Families have been able to make outstanding financial and social development.
- They can afford annual health insurance for the whole family.
- They can pay for their children's school fees.
- They can maintain their shelters,
- They have made some savings and other personal developments as they testify to it by themselves.

iii. EVOLUTION OF THE PROGRAM

- Beneficiaries were able to raise their capital to invest in many other opportunities.
- They've got some markets to supply and have gained unique entrepreneurial experiences.

iv. ADVANCED TECHNOLOGY METHODS BEING USED

The only technology used is an electrical sewing machine.

v. BARRIERS TO LONG-TERM SUCCESS

There has not been any research to truly understand what members go through every day, which will lead RC to the exact and effective way to empower these families. For example, as of now, beneficiaries are struggling to make significant savings to expand what they do as all their earned profits get into solving families' daily necessities and problems.

- Lack of Knowledge about linking them with potential clients looking for young tailoring cooperatives.
- How to put some other technological knowledge to their fingertips to give them a broader and richer experience that could even allow them to reach those far away for services or learning purposes.
- How to increase their market even from their respective villages

C. Program Funding

Eighty-five percent of the kids in the RC program are supported by an international, and each sponsor gives \$50 per month.⁸⁰ This donation covers all a child's needs, including medical insurance, food, education, school uniform, books, etc.).⁸¹ Every month, every sponsor gets an email with updates on their children.

Most of RC's funding is individual-based donations acquired through networking with people worldwide.⁸² This is done mainly for big capital projects like classrooms, health centers, dormitories, dining, and sports facilities.⁸³ We have a donor database consisting of our partners' emails, and occasionally, we send an appeal for donations and take care of most small projects, like supporting kids who are malnourished and buying schoolbooks.⁸⁴ Also, we applied for Rwanda Government grants for some projects, and RC has been able to secure some. RC has been able to leverage social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and e-newsletter) use by utilizing it to update and stay connected with partners, and that has become successful, plus the Rwanda Children website: www.rwandachildren.org. Our partners use it for current news and to give their donations.

What Rwanda Children is doing for Ntarama Village could be duplicated and be done in another location in Rwanda or elsewhere. There are poverty and poor mindsets in the minds of parents.⁸⁵ Rwanda Children hosts interns from different countries worldwide, and they come to help while learning what RC does and how.⁸⁶ Among the visitors are other organization leaders from Rwanda and beyond who want to know our community development skills and go back and apply them. Because of that, I am mentoring several other organizations, and it brings joy that I can have a level of influence not just in one community but for the whole country and sometimes abroad.

⁸⁰ See *Sponsor*, RWANDA CHILD., <https://www.rwandachildren.org/sponsor> (last visited Mar. 15, 2024).

⁸¹ *Id.*

⁸² *Id.*

⁸³ *Id.*

⁸⁴ *E.g.*, Posting of Rwanda Children, serge@rwandachildren.org to e2ma.net (Nov. 28, 2023, 9:05 AM) (on file with author) (asking partners for donations to help raise \$10,000 to equip RC's optometry clinic).

⁸⁵ Andy Harrington, *Justice and Dignity in a Rwandan School*, ENDING POVERTY TOGETHER, <https://endingpovertytogether.org/justice-and-dignity-in-a-rwandan-school/> (last visited Apr. 5, 2024).

⁸⁶ See *About Rwanda Children*, *supra* note 38; see also Posting of Rwanda Children, serge@rwandachilren.org to e2ma.net (July 27, 2023, 11:35 AM) (on file with author) (thanking two interns from America who served over the summer in the primary school and health center).

VII. CONCLUSION

In this Article, I talked about hate and division propagandized by the Belgian colonists and the Hutu government's genocide against Tutsi, which led to the genocide of Tutsi that took more than one million lives in a matter of 100 days⁸⁷ and was tragic for human beings and the century.

I talked about the disappointment caused by the youth who got corrupted and were engaged in destroying our country, Rwanda. However, those other youths who stood up and fought their fellow youths and the government that was committing the genocide are applauded for their heroism, and that is where I draw my inspiration and courage to serve my community of Ntarama through Rwanda Children. I founded to serve at-risk children and vulnerable families through different programs such as the school for small kids from Pre-K to High school, Sewing vocational training for teen mothers, family transformation to empower family through cooperatives, savings and microloans, malnutrition, healthcare and youth empowerment. These programs have brought a tremendous change to my community, and people could testify to that. One of those impact RC has brought and is very encouraging is the fact that all these programs bring together all races together, and because of that, people have been reconciled and become united where people do not see each other through the lens of tribes.

⁸⁷ *Resource Guides- Rwanda*, UNIV. OF MINN. COLL. OF LIBERAL ARTS: HOLOCAUST & GENOCIDE STUD., <https://cla.umn.edu/chgs/holocaust-genocide-education/resource-guides/rwanda> (last visited Apr. 4, 2024).