



Uyisenga N'Manzi

Seventeen years after the 1994 genocide, there are 400,000 survivors of the genocide in Rwanda: 100,000 survivors are aged between 17 and 25; 75,000 were orphaned, 60,000 are categorised as very vulnerable. It is estimated that there are 50,000 households living under the supervision of a child under the age of eighteen, of which 90% are headed by young girls without any source of income.

Orphans face a particularly uncertain future. Many still suffer the consequences of the genocide. Many suffer mental health problems resulting from trauma. There is a great burden on many orphans as heads of households to care for and educate their younger siblings. Girls raped during the genocide are HIV positive. Many orphans remain homeless.

UYISENGA N'MANZI was established in 2002 as a Rwandan non-governmental and non-profit organization to respond to the problems faced by orphans living in child-headed households affected by the genocide and HIV/AIDS. It was formally registered by Ministerial Order N° 70/11 of 10 August 2005 with its headquarters in Kacyiru, Gasabo District, in Kigali City.

UYISENGA N'MANZI works with child headed households by providing psychosocial and economic support to facilitate their integration into the wider community. The objective of UYISENGA N'MANZI is not to give assistance to the children and to make them dependent on the organization. On the contrary, the aim is to make them more self reliant and independent and achieve sustainable development.

Education

To achieve this goal, UYISENGA N'MANZI insists on the education of the children by providing school fees and scholastic materials. 1,200 children have been provided with financial assistance for school, but over 500 more children still require support. In addition, there is a critical need for support for children that have graduated from secondary school that require support to enrol in higher education, either university or vocational school.

Conjoined with this issue is the lack of employment opportunities for orphans once they have graduated. As such, we have established a new professional skills centre in Rwamagana, Eastern Region of Rwanda, which is providing professional skills to our members in trades such as plumbing and mechanics.

UYISENGA N'MANZI currently provides financial support to enable 11 of our members to attend university, and a further 72 children to attend vocational school. 142 children have graduated from vocational school, the majority of which are now in employment. However, there are a further 256 children that have graduated from secondary school still awaiting financial support.

Economic empowerment

The second component of the work is economic empowerment. The community development project of UYISENGA N'MANZI has helped 32 associations each composed of 100 orphans in ten districts of Rwanda to launch income generating projects (including farming projects, goat rearing, and handicrafts). This has been supplemented more recently by a new programme which funds micro-businesses of small self-help groups of three or four orphan-headed

households which helps them buy seeds and tools for agro-pastoral activities. Income generated helps to pay for health insurance, decent food and school materials. Before this, many of these children were suffering from malnutrition and unable to go to school.

UYISENGA N'MANZI has adapted the historical traditional approach of community work called "*umuganda*" where orphans headed households gather to work on the shared project, for example to build or repair a house for one of them, which helps to foster greater bonds of support amongst the community..

Psychosocial support

Work has also focussed on trauma healing through a psychosocial programme that trains psychosocial animators, identified from amongst the older orphans, to offer individual and group counselling. This is supplemented by the model of the "solidarity camp" which UYISENGA N'MANZI has pioneered in Rwanda, which brings together orphans three times a year and empowers members to respond to their psychosocial and economic needs. This is vital at the time of the national commemoration of the genocide in April. The programme involves exchanges, active listening, group expression, all facilitated by trained counselors.

A mentoring programme has also been established which pairs adult volunteers with orphans under the supervision of UYISENGA N'MANZI, which gives the youth the opportunity to have regular contact with a significant adult, which addresses problems of social isolation and exclusion which otherwise can arise. The volunteers are trained to offer guidance and advice, and also serve as a valuable role model.

Additional support

In 2010 UYISENGA N'MANZI has helped to rehabilitate 15 houses, as well as train fifty orphans as paralegals, to provide basic support and advice to other members in need. Special assistance has been provided to 200 orphans, and urgent assistance to nearly 400 orphan-headed households, to enable them to meet their basic needs (for food and water), and special medical care provided to 132 orphans.

Our partners

CAFOD: Trauma healing

European Commission: Psychosocial and gender program

Government of Rwanda: Economic empowerment and capacity-building

IREX: advocacy

Stanford University: Research program

Survivors Fund (SURF): Advocacy and capacity-building

UNICEF: Education and child protection

The future

This holistic approach has proved to be transformative. However, UYISENGA N'MANZI has only in membership 3,200 orphans, a small proportion of the estimated 100,000 vulnerable orphans of genocide and HIV requiring support. The work is being assessed and evaluated by a team from Stanford University, which will demonstrate the evidence-based success of the model that we have developed.