



The Kigali Genocide Memorial

The [Kigali Genocide Memorial](#) is a place of remembrance and learning. It remembers the victims of the 1994 Genocide Against the Tutsi of whom more than 250,000 are buried in the mass graves at the memorial. But the brilliant team that manage the memorial – several of whose families are laid to rest in the mass graves, now lead a major education programme that teaches reconciliation to primary and secondary schools and adult groups.

I was privileged to live and work in Rwanda for three years as Director of the programmes but with expertise drawn from many sources. The programme, which is run by the [Aegis Trust](#), aims to contribute to sustainable peace in Rwanda through 'peace education' within formal and non-formal education and to influence related policies through research.

The programmes use a storytelling methodology, with the narratives of survivors and children of survivors telling their stories of reconciliation. We conducted an outreach programme in all regions of Rwanda and established a permanent peace education centre at the Kigali Genocide Memorial. Teachers across the country were trained to deliver the programmes, which were then incorporated into the national school curriculum, which has "Peace and Values" as a crosscutting component. In addition, peace schools are now being established across the country and these schools will be resource centres for training, and events for teachers, parents, young people, and other community members.

Those that prepare the education materials and deliver the programmes are survivors of the genocide. Imagine just how difficult that can be, teaching children, whose parents may have been perpetrators, or may be serving a prison sentence for genocide, or may be related to the person that killed your own parents. They overcome this because they know that revenge does



not build a better society, whereas reconciliation, forgiveness, and education, not propaganda and hate is how people learn to live together.

The team in Rwanda is archiving the transcripts from the Gacaca court hearings, 60 million pages from hearings across Rwanda. This was a unique application of justice, which is playing a significant role in reconciliation. The International Court for Rwanda (ICTR) indicted only 96 individuals from a genocide that killed over 800,000 in 100 days and that court was held outside Rwanda. The Gacaca courts brought justice to the towns in Rwanda and will be an archive of considerable historical importance.

Some members of our Rwandan team have collected personal testimonies from survivors, so the history is not forgotten. This requires enormous resilience listening to those that survived but witnessed horrific acts of genocide. Again, imagine the courage it takes for a person to interview a survivor, listening to their story and knowing that could have been what happened to their parents, siblings, and neighbours. I read the transcripts to prepare them for the [Genocide Archive of Rwanda](#) and the heart breaking stories, the unimaginable loss and brutality of the killers made me wonder how my Rwandan colleagues could find the humanity to do their work.

Rwanda has been hit by Coronavirus, not only through cases and deaths though thankfully very few, but by the virtual halt of international visitors. The Kigali Genocide Memorial normally receives circa 80,000 visitors each



year, which makes a significant contribution to funding the memorial, and the peace education programmes. With the visitors not able to visit Rwanda, that funding has dried up.

Today is [Giving Tuesday](#), a global campaign for individuals, businesses and charities alike to celebrate their CSR achievements and to raise awareness of the amazing things that employees do to support causes that can make a world of difference. Please spend some time today celebrating achievements within your organisation and encourage giving, and for those that want to support the work of the Kigali Genocide Memorial and its search for justice, peace, and reconciliation, please buy something, or donate [here](#). Thank you.

John Petrie MBE joined Aegis Trust, a prevention of genocide charity, as a Trustee in 2008 then became Director of Programmes in Rwanda in 2012 and continues to support the work of the Kigali Genocide Memorial.

John Petrie MBE