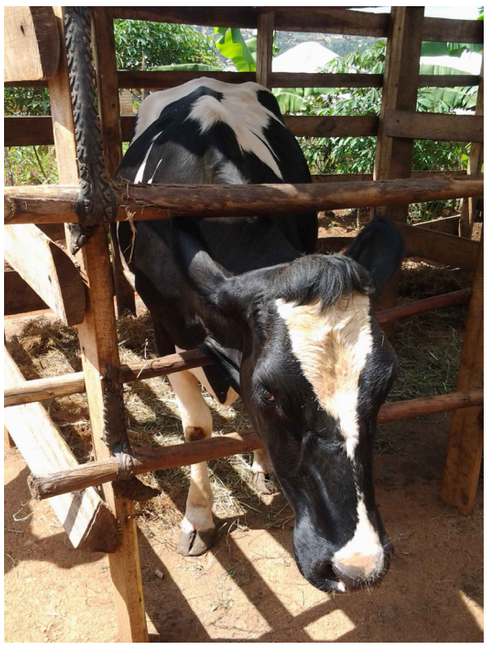
FARG @20: Celebrating achievements, focusing on sustainable reintegration and the development for survivors

By Jean d'Amour Mbonyinshuti



A house built through shelter project



A cow given to survivors

As the country and the world commemorate 25 years since the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi, the Genocide Survivors Assistance Fund (FARG) is so grateful to the Government and partners who supported them tirelessly and gave them the hope to live again.

FARG officials say that the journey has been hard but possible and the rest is to sustain gains, build on them and embark on the sustainable reintegration and development of members.

According to Theophile Ruberangeyo, FARG's Director General, the Government has done a tremendous job to ensure that Genocide survivors who needed help are catered for and live better lives despite the tragedy that befell them.

Over the last 20 years since FARG started, the Government has injected over Rwf 267 billion in five programs, health, social protection, shelter, education and income-generating activities.

The Fund focused on supporting education for young Genocide survivors who otherwise would not have attended school without Government support, as orphans. Education and health took the lion's share, consuming a third of the total amount according to Ruberangeyo. "We have managed to educate over 100,000 young Genocide survivors who completed secondary education while over 33,000 students completed university," Ruberangeyo told The New Times in an interview.

"We also have people who supported us in the education sector while some universities supported us by waiving school fees for FARG children. In the health sector we dealt with various cases because, due to the Genocide, one patient can suffer from multiple ailments such as high blood pressure, diabetes, and physical injuries. Over 2million cases were treated," he said. Ruberangeyo hails Rwanda Military Hospital for their support that saw hundreds of special cases treated at the hospital. FARG has been able to fly transfer patients to get treatment abroad. According to Ruberangeyo, over 450 patients were transferred abroad.

In shelter, he said the Government and partners have constructed over 44,000 houses while many others have been rehabilitated. "This was all achieved due to the support of the Government and partners such as Unity Club members who helped us get shelters for the elderly persons, Mpinganzima, that shelter 164 elderly Genocide survivors, one in Huye district and another one in Bugesera district," he said.

Other partners he mentioned include AVEGA, Ibuka, Caritas Rwanda, UNCHR, Red

Cross, and Catholic Relief Services, among others. He also hailed the Reserve Force for helping in the construction of strong houses to provide shelter for the needy.
Challenges

"We faced challenges in health. Treating our members was hard because most of the survivors who were wounded had no family members to support them since their partners and children were killed, exacerbating their health situation," he said. According to Ruberangeyo, this calls for additional funds since health services are getting more expensive while diseases are also increasing.

Another challenge is old shelters where most houses were constructed during the emergency period and were not well constructed. "We still need more money to rehabilitate such dilapidated houses," he said. In the education sector, while FARG would have completed sponsoring students who survived the Genocide, some students delayed studying due to various reasons, including trauma, while some children were heads of families. FARG still has to take care of those who still need to study and help them acquire mainstream education as well as Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET).

FARG also deals with changing mindsets since some fail to take care of the houses they are given and other property and use them to develop themselves.

Future prospects

According to FARG officials, the journey to ensure survivors' welfare should focus on their sustainable reintegration and development so that they live normal lives as other Rwandans. "We started by dealing with emergencies at the time the situation required us to do so, when FARG started. Thereafter, we embarked on rehabilitation, dealing with homeless families and survivors who were affected both physically and emotionally," Ruberangeyo said.

"The next step was the reintegration phase to help our members reintegrate in the society. We started this process and our members are reintegrated in medical subscription and get treatment through Mutuelle de Santé, are integrated in Vision Umurenge Programme (VUP) and public works and access financial services such as the Business Development Fund," Ruberangeyo said.

He added that FARG is also looking for ways to support students who graduate from university to be self-employed to deal with the current unemployment rate which is high. "What we are doing is looking for the budget to support students who graduate from university to be able to create their own jobs. We want to support them and ensure that they have the basic materials to become self-employed. "For young students, we want to ensure that we support the last phase of students we have and help them join university and TVET so that they become more productive and self-employed he said."

For those who still need to get treatment, the Fund finds them social protection projects after treatment to help them to graduate from one Ubudehe social category to another. Ruberangeyo added that FARG will keep working with Government institutions to ensure that Genocide survivors', especially elderly ones, are taken care of and live a dignified life. "We want to keep on supporting the elderly Genocide survivors in a professional way, to know their daily living conditions, what they should eat and what they need, the kind of treatment they need so that they live a dignified life. We want to take full charge of the needy survivors," he said.

Thamar Mukasharangabo, now 27, lost both her parents during the Genocide. The orphan from the current Eastern province managed to attend primary school but had no financial capacity to join secondary school until FARG intervened.

"The Fund started to support me in 2007. At that time school fees was Rwf 70, 000 per trimester, besides other needs. I could not afford to pay such an amount since my guardians

who survived had no financial capacity.
She completed secondary school in 2013 and joined the University of Kigali in 2014. The young survivor who graduated last year said that even though she has not yet got a permanent job, she is currently earning income from casual work, paying her



Girinka program to support survivors



A two in one house built for vulnerable survivors