

REHABILITATIVE JUSTICE FOR RECONCILIATION IN RWANDA

PRISONERS ON THE JOURNEY OF ASKING FOR FORGIVENESS



DUTEZE IMBERE UBUTABERA (DIU) ACTIVITY



This publication was made possible through support provided by the U.S. Agency for International Development under the terms of Contract No. IQC Contract No. AID-OAA-I-13-00032; TO No. 72069618F00002. The opinions expressed herein are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the U.S. Agency for International Development.

THIS DOCUMENT PRESENTS TESTIMONIES OF PRISONERS WHO PARTICIPATE IN THE PROGRAM AIMED AT ASKING FOR FORGIVENESS FOR THE CRIMES THEY COMMITTED DURING THE GENOCIDE AGAINST THE TUTSI AND THE TESTIMONIES OF THE SURVIVORS WHO GRANTED FORGIVENESS.

PRISONERS INCARCERATED IN HUYE, NYAMAGABE AND RUSIZI PRISONS WHO ARE NATIVE OF NYAMASHEKE AND NYARUGURU DISTRICTS AND GENOCIDE SURVIVORS FROM NYAMASHEKE AND NYARUGURU DISTRICTS.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Message to the Reader 3

I. SUMMARY OF THE CONTENTS OF THIS BOOKLET..... 4

II. VARIOUS TESTIMONIES OF THE BENEFICIARIES COLLECTED 6

2.1. Testimonies of prisoners participating in therapeutic groups 6

2.2. Testimonies from beneficiaries during reconciliation events 22

2.3. Testimonies from inmates of Rusizi prison after asking for forgiveness in public 25

III. CONCLUSION..... 35

Message to the Reader

Didé (Dignity in Detention) is a non-governmental organization, founded in 1992 in Geneva, Switzerland. It started operating in Rwanda in 1998.

In collaboration with the Rwanda Correctional Services (RCS), DiDé operates in eight (8) Rwandan prisons, namely: Nyagatare, Rwamagana, Ngoma, Bugesera, Nyarugenge, Huye, Nyamagabe, and Rusizi. It supports, most especially, women and children in the context of promoting human rights and those deprived from some civic rights due to the sanctions they were sentenced.

Since March 2019, with the support of USAID, through its Duteze Imbere Ubutabera (DIU) project, the DiDé Foundation has launched a justice project aiming at unity and reconciliation of Rwandans. The purpose is to reconcile the perpetrators of Genocide committed against Tutsi incarcerated in Huye, Nyamagabe, and Rusizi prisons, who are native of Nyamasheke or Nyaruguru districts, with the survivors from those districts and the greater Rwandan community in general, including the families of the inmates' families. This booklet includes testimonies from the stakeholders collected during various stages of the project implementation.

We are grateful for the unwavering cooperation of various agencies involved in the implementation of this project. These include the National Unity and Reconciliation Commission (NURC), Rwanda Correctional Services (RCS), Nyamasheke and Nyaruguru Districts, and USAID/Duteze Imbere Ubutabera.

We cannot end without thanking the beneficiaries, and everyone who contributed to the preparation of this booklet.

Wishing you peace.

Odette MUKANSORO
Regional Delegate DiDé
Foundation

I. SUMMARY OF THE CONTENTS OF THIS BOOKLET

The document includes various testimonies from prisoners convicted of crimes of the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi, who are incarcerated in Huye, Nyamagabe and Rusizi prisons. Some of the prisoners who shared their testimonies are still incarcerated; others are progressively finishing serving their sentences and will be released from prison. These testimonies were shared between June 2019 and March 2020.

These testimonies were gathered at various times: (i) those collected during therapeutic groups; (ii) those collected during the activity of apologizing, where the survivors were invited to prison, and the members of the group heard that a genuine apology frees the perpetrators and their victims, and helps to reestablish good relationships they had prior the Genocide, as well as with the Rwandan community as a whole, and thus constitute a key pillar to building the nation and (iii) during the process of public apology in places where the crimes were committed by the inmates who took that step to apologize.

In addition to the inmates who committed the crime of the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi, there are testimonies from some of the survivors. These testimonies were shared during the sessions of forgiving the perpetrators. There are lastly testimonies from the families of the inmates who apologized.

As the days passed, the prisoners in the therapeutic groups were grouped into three main categories:

Those who wanted to apologize, but lacked the guidance to follow: often you would notice that they went through various programs, including government initiatives, such as “NdiUmunyarwanda”/ “I am Rwandan” and those led by other partners who encouraged inmates to unity and reconciliation, but at the end they were not able to meet face-to-face with those they betrayed and apologize.

Those who joined the program, and, once enrolled, were able to understand its aims, and decided to apologize: here we find a category of those who understood the process quickly, immediately decided to apologize, but there are others for whom it took a long time, but until now, during the 8 months in the program, they are also gradually deciding to apologize.

Those who joined the program, but have not yet decided to apologize: in this category, we find: (i) those who still think that serving their sentence is enough, there is no need to apologize, (ii) those who say they don't feel guilty; they can't apologize to anyone, (iii) those who say they are still thinking about it. All of these prisoners remain in groups voluntarily, and afterward, they will choose to make the decision on their own, because even their peers who took the initiative to apologize did it in different stages, depending on how they felt about the process, and how group discussions have helped them. Everyone is being helped at their current level, with the goal of reconciling them with those they betrayed after they deliberately apologized to the victims.

II. VARIOUS TESTIMONIES OF THE BENEFICIARIES COLLECTED

2.1. Testimonies of prisoners participating in therapeutic groups

These testimonies were collected at the beginning of the journey of asking for forgiveness. This was carried out in therapeutic groups, for prisoners convicted of the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi, who were incarcerated in Huye, Nyamagabe, and Rusizi prisons. Here they met once a week, for one hour.

A selection of testimonies follows below:

- I. **NZ** is a woman incarcerated in Nyamagabe prison. During the genocide against the Tutsi, she went with her brother to steal tiles from the furnace where they worked. When they found out that their employer was a Tutsi, they went to plunder the tiles they had made for him. She clearly explains that she didn't know his name because although she worked in the area, he was not originally from there. Workers called him Boss. She had the following discussion in the group with her peers. The group started helping the prisoner to understand her role, and after various discussions in that group, she, later on, apologized to the family she had betrayed.

In the initial discussion, she said "I don't know what I did wrong, because I helped my brother to carry the tiles they had plundered from the furnace of the man they were working for; I don't know that man's name, they called him Boss." Her group members told her "But robbery is also a crime. Wasn't that a sign that the next thing to do was to kill him? Personally, I feel I would present an apology for taking someone's tiles without his permission or buying them."

"At that time, all his employees were taking them," she said. I also went with that gang, but I didn't think much about it, because at that time my family was at the hospital, I didn't have time to conduct the attacks. But my brother told me to go and help him

to carry them, and I agreed.”

Another time they were in a group, NZ continued to share updates and thoughts with her peers, she said: "All these years I've been wondering why I'm in prison and I feel like the family I've committed a crime against had persecuted me and for a crime my brother had committed. I even participated to some group discussions and wondered why you didn't understand me either. I kept thinking about it. I even used to discuss with MK (a member of her group), and I would discuss with MMC (a facilitator) because I felt the need to understand my role. Slowly I became more aware of my responsibility.” “Don't you think that I have supported the killers? I didn't stay at home as I had stayed to keep the house, and I also joined the rabble that stole the tiles. I also wondered how I would feel if the stolen tiles were mine, where I would be hiding [if she was the one chased]; given, at that time the victim was hiding, and I was aware of my refusal to cooperate during all the past years, since I did not want to endorse the truth of the crime I had committed.

However, the testimonies of my peers in this group made me think; for there were things we were doing without thinking much about it, not knowing that it would have repercussions. So, the consequences were hard for us to understand, because we did not expect that. I heard how my peers also confessed the crimes they committed and supported men (referring to women who used to gather the stones that men used to kill people during the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi), and found that their crimes were similar to mine who wanted to put all the blame on my brother, this also helped me understand my role. So, after meditating about my case, listening to the testimonies of my peers, and the specific conversations I had with my peers, and the ones I had with the MMC (facilitators); I realized that I was guilty. I am now determined to apologize to the family I plundered. I took the initiative to write to them. I want to appease my heart and to relieve those I have betrayed so that I can reconcile with them, and that even on the day I will be released, I will go out feeling light-hearted, ready to live well with them, and with the Rwandan community. I deeply thank the group,

because they helped me so much. I would say I was very resistant, but they helped me to reach a better place.”

During the activity where perpetrators asked for forgiveness to the victims (an activity that took place at the prison), in an interview she had with a person whose relatives she looted from, she apologized, explaining to him how she had progressed after discussing with her peers in the group, and she forgave her. She said, "You were imprisoned on your own fault, because others have pleaded guilty and their sentences were reduced, they have now finished serving the community work they were sentenced to. We got to understand that forgiveness liberates. We also need to be free. I truly forgive you. And when you finish the sentence, don't be afraid, we are ready to welcome and live well with you." They ended the conversation in a hug, displaying happiness on their faces.

- 2. MG** is a woman incarcerated in Nyamagabe Prison native of Nyamasheke District, where she committed the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi. She says her husband is alive, but he is so poor and very old that he can't even visit her in prison. He used to visit her in Rusizi prison in 2015 and before. But even in 2019, he visited her once, in Nyamagabe Prison. At the time, he had sold coffee. She has 8 children but she has no news from all of them because they do not visit her. Besides, one of her children was born after the genocide (she became pregnant after the genocide, but it was her husband's). She gave birth while in prison, but the baby was immediately taken away by individuals she doesn't know much about. The child does not visit her, and they don't even know each other. Her apology goes towards a young man who survived the Genocide against the Tutsi, she gloated over the body of his mother, **“MR”**. The inmate will complete her sentence in 2020. But she says she does not remember well the month.

She says it in these words: “I have a husband and 8 children, and they are all alive. Due to poverty my family last visited me in 2015 while I was incarcerated in Rusizi Prison. But in 2019 my husband visited me once when he had sold coffee.

I have a young child born in 1995, now (she) is in university (that's

what I hear because I don't even know her), the doctor working at my delivery facility in Nyamasheke took her, registered her as her own, and even registered her with FARG, they pay for her school fees, but they forbade her to visit me, the child also agreed. The last time I saw her, she was a newborn, now I can't recognize her.

My husband was imprisoned, but he was released, because the genocide took place in his absence; he was in Nyungwe watching the car of a white boss he worked for in the tea plantation, the car had broken down. After spending days waiting for the white man to come back in vain, he decided to leave the forest; it was only when he came out that he learned that the genocide had taken place.

I am imprisoned for the crime of gloating over the corpse: during the Genocide, we went to harvest taros from the fields of the Tutsi who had just been killed, and we found out that all the taros had been taken, but we found that there was cassava remaining in the fields, that is what we took. So, from there, we found out they had killed a mother named **MR**, so I grabbed the small hoe I had, after digging the cassava and rotated her body, to find out who they had killed, and after finding out her identity I did nothing about it, we rather passed her, continued on our way and left her there. I sincerely apologize to her son for gloating over his mother's body. What I did was completely wrong, and I apologize for that. I want to reconcile with the family I betrayed, and get back to live well with them as we used to. All the years I was in prison I've always pled guilty. I thank the DiDé Foundation that helped us work in groups, where we talk about our problems and even create a process for asking for forgiveness. Because I had always wanted it, and even sent a message to the survivors I had betrayed, but a meeting was not yet possible. So now I am happy

that I will finish serving my sentence and ask for forgiveness to the person I offended.”

3. In Nyamagabe Prison, the inmate **NV** explained to the group how she chased away a child a mother had entrusted her to hide from the killers. When she saw the situation was serious, she chased the child away and sent him to the place where his mother was hiding, and asked the child to join the mother. On the way the child met the killers before he reached his mother’s hideout, they killed him. Moreover, the inmate did not even accompany the child to reach where his mother was. The child went alone. The prisoner testified in the group, at the beginning she was in denial of her participation, but as she discussed with her peers, she came to realize the crime she had committed, even to the point of apologizing to the family she had failed.

Group members: When you reflect back when you told him to go, don’t you think you have something to do with his death?

Prisoner: But I’m not the one who killed him!

Group members: How does your heart feel when you think about it?

Prisoner: My heart? (She pauses for a moment).....It’s just that I let go of a child I was entrusted with, who met the killers, and I didn’t even accompany him.

Group members: It’s good to keep thinking about it.

Prisoner: I will apologize to his family because I didn’t keep the child who was left with me and I let him go, and there were murderers on his way.

Another time in the group, she said: “With the time I spend in the group, I learned a lot. Initially, they told us to set our hearts free, talked about making a step, and dare to analyze our hearts in the mirror in front of us, I wouldn’t understand. But the more I learned, the more I would think about it. Do you know what it is to face a bad thing you have done and accept to look at it? It is not easy; it’s like swallowing a bitter pill, but it heals. When it’s there, you refuse to face it, and you push back. You even defend yourself; so, this even disturbs your peace, you fail to sleep. Like me, I used to say, "Would you rather die because of someone else?" But here I was defensive before I accepted what I had done.

But one day I was talking to **MC** (facilitator), and that's when I realized that accepting what I did would bring me peace. Because my heart was conflicted in two ways: the way I sent away the child I was entrusted and asking myself, 'then would you agree to die because of a person you're hiding?' But when I realized that accepting what I had done, not always having a wandering heart, would give me comfort, and it would relieve the family that entrusted me with the child and I abandoned him.

So right now, I have decided to apologize, so I could feel free, and to set free the family I betrayed. I decided to write to them and asking them to come so I can ask for forgiveness, sincerely."

She concludes: "Who knows? Maybe had I kept the child, he would be still alive. And even if something had happened to him, I would not feel ashamed, as I feel now for having cowardly abandoned a young child."

4. Some of the women detained in the Nyamagabe Prison were convicted of jointly collecting stones and carry them closer to their husbands so they can use them to kill Tutsi who had taken refuge in Nyamasheke Church (Nyamasheke District). Because they [Tutsi] had tried to defend themselves, the Interahamwe had failed to kill them. One of the women pled guilty of that collective crime, and she particularly recognizes the crime of wearing clothes her husband robbed from the killed victims, and she is afraid that her husband incarcerated in Rusizi prison might not have confessed it. The woman, whom we named **MM**, who has been imprisoned since 2009, sentenced to 15 years, said: "Although we have committed a monstrous crime with my peers, I apologize on my behalf for carrying the stones, bringing them closer to our husbands and brothers so they could use them to kill the Tutsi who had taken refuge in Nyamasheke Church. Since

they were able to defend themselves, men decided to throw stones in the Church, with the intention to kill those using stones, and they would kill anyone walking out of the church. When men finished using the stones, they asked the women in the area to gather more stones and bring them closer to them.” “So, we worked hard, we went looking for stones everywhere, and we brought them closer to them, and they used them to kill people in the church: innocent men, women, children, the elderly and the young, who had come from all corners, all died in that church.” There were people we knew, but there are many others we didn’t know,” she said, “I am deeply saddened by how I got involved in the crime, I am imprisoned and my husband is incarcerated in Rusizi prison; we left our children alone, at a very young age! There is also another crime I have to apologize for accepting the clothes my husband stole from the victims killed in the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi, and wearing them. I wish my husband could also apologize for this crime.

At the time she asked for forgiveness in the prison, this prisoner **MM** had the opportunity to apologize in public, saying: “I apologize for the abominable crime we committed, we killed our community members. I and other female neighbors carried stones closer to the men so they can kill the Tutsi who had taken refuge in Nyamasheke Church. We did it without giving much thought, ignoring the fact that the victims who were being killed were people just like us.”

“Before joining the therapeutic groups, many, myself included, felt we were being falsely accused, we would blame the men who threw stones. But after joining the groups, we learned a lot of lessons. Among the things I got to clearly understand was the fact the Genocide was planned way before: We learned about the involvement of the government, the authorities, the international community and that of individuals; and that’s where I started to recognize my participation. Although some encouraged us to kill our neighbors, not everyone agreed to take part in the killings. If I hadn’t carried the stones, maybe some would have survived, but they were killed by the stones I brought. That is my role, I

take responsibility for it, I apologize for that. I ask for forgiveness to the families of **D, E, and F** who lived next door, whose relatives we killed in the church. I apologize to all the people who have lost their relatives in Nyamasheke Church, and I apologize to the Genocide survivors, and the Rwandan community for the crime we committed, enhanced with unimaginable atrocities.

I also apologize to the **NN**'s family because after the killing of **KK** I wore clothes that they stole from her. I sincerely apologize for all these crimes. Now I have learned, and I am remorseful for what I did. I do apologize, and as soon as I have completed serving my sentence, I am ready to live well together with these neighbors as we used in the past and work together to continue to build our nation.

5. Apologizing properly by telling the truth of what happened by the perpetrator himself is the complete path to reconciliation. **MBS**, The woman incarcerated at Nyamagabe prison, on a 15-year prison sentence since 2007, explained how she was forgiven by survivors after apologizing and confessing to all the crimes she committed, while in the past, she was not forgiven because there was a crime to which she refused to plead guilty; the crime of indicating to the killers the person to be killed, by telling them that he is Tutsi. The very day she apologized; she was forgiven. It has been proven that the apologies requested previously were not sincere and could not allow reconciliation between the two.

She said “I had always apologized to **NE** for indicating the hideout of the three members of his/her family, and the killers found them, pulled them out, and killed them. **NE** told me s/he forgave me for that crime, but that I had to tell him/her the full story so that we could sincerely reconcile. After joining the group that encouraged us to apologize properly, I sent **NE** a message that I wanted to apologize. When the time for apology arrived, we sat down and talked, and when I started to apologize, s/he also said

to me, "You told me a lot of things, but there is something you didn't explain to me; who said the word "Tutsi"?"

I replied, "It's me who said it," but I was ashamed to tell you that. But today I was determined to apologize to you.

S/he said, "So what was your motive when you said it?"

I also said, "You know well that they were killing Tutsi. As you can guess, I wanted them to know that you were also a Tutsi, you don't want me to lie to you, do you?"

He said "I was always saddened by the fact that you hadn't told me that information, even though I had forgiven you because you told me about the killings of my family members, but I felt the forgiveness was not fully granted. I completely forgive you, of course, I forgave you before you apologized but that element was missing."

The inmate added "I know the genocide survivors have forgiven us before they were even asked to forgive. Because they know that forgiveness liberates. A full apology is what they need, without apologizing in portions, because it helps them too. And we also understood that it was liberating to us, and our families living in the community. When prisoners who have asked for forgiveness are visited by their family members here in prison, we hear testimonies."

- 6. NE** incarcerated in Nyamagabe Prison, also explained her role in killing the child she had at home, the mother of the child had left him so **NE** could hide him/.She said "the child we had been hiding for a while was left by his mother, who also went to find another place to hide. My husband wanted her to stay at home, but I refused, I was afraid they might kill all of us together. I asked my husband to take the child away from our home so they wouldn't kill us together. He took the child out, handed him over to the Interahamwe, who joined him in killing the child, and threw him into the Migina River (Nyaruguru District).

Before I joined the therapeutic groups, I hadn't been able to recognize my role. But I understood that refuting my participation while I played a role, equals to refusing to feel liberated. However, I still relive it many times; I remember when the time I gave him refuge, I remember how I told my husband to get rid of him, I

couldn't find peace. I tried to ignore it, but it kept coming back. When the groups were initiated here in the prison, I joined them, listened to how others were confessing the crimes they had committed, I would observe how the discussions helped them to feel free, and I would see that there were no other repercussions and I also decided to confess my crime. It helped me a lot, I felt light-hearted, and I even understood that apologizing was possible, because in the past I couldn't see where I would start from. Yet, thanks to group discussions, I was aware that it would be easy to apologize. Besides, we even committed the crime during the daytime. Now all that remains is to wait for the day that the child's parent will come to forgive me because I wrote to her. I am also ready to tell her the truth, and humbly apologize.”

7. **NT** has been incarcerated in Nyamagabe Prison since 2007 and is serving a 15-year sentence. She has served 13 years, with two (2) remaining. Her testimony confirms that women also participated in the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi, where she and her female peers killed their friend's child and threw /him into the river. She said "I apologize to **FR** because I participated in the attack led by women and that killed her child. We snatched the child from her, took him to Migina River, it was where we killed him from and then threw him in the river. It was an exclusively women-led attack." She continues saying "Being in the group helped me; it healed the wounds I had. Even perpetrators are wounded, but most people don't understand it; whenever I think about the child we killed, I can't sleep.”

“The discussions in therapeutic groups liberated me. After sharing the crimes I committed with my peers, I felt relieved. I need to apologize to the family I betrayed, we did it openly during the daytime. I take full responsibility, and I need to apologize to feel relieved of the heavy burden on my heart. I have now sent a message to **FR** family; if they accept too, they will forgive me.”

8. According to the woman from Nyamagabe prison, there are women who were directly involved in killing or conspiracy for killing people, in some cases, they could have saved. While in the

group, this woman shared with others her journey that led her to apologize. This was after apologizing to those she had betrayed, who had come to prison. In her own words, you find out that she used the best opportunity she had to help someone to kill them. She said "I apologize for indicating a person to killers who came and executed her. At first, they came and hit her with a hoe I had given to them, but they left before she had died. When I looked at her again, I found that she was not dead, but instead of assisting her, I called the killers again and told them that she was not dead. They came back and finished killing her."

Ever since I joined the group, I started thinking about ways I could properly apologize. I continued to participate in the group until I dared to tell my group members about the crime I had committed. Because I apologized on the third round, I have been constantly observing how my peers apologized, and how survivors would take it. I continued to learn.

Honestly, I would see how those who spoke the truth were easily forgiven, and whenever we would talk, I would find out they felt relieved. They would also tell us about conversations they have had with the survivors, that's how I made up my mind.

So, I would like to apologize, and confess my role in handling the hoe they used to kill someone, that they left breathing. It was a partial confession because the killers had left the victim before she died, I went to call them, after checking and found that she was not dead, and then they came back and killed her. In this case, isn't it me who killed her? I continued to argue about that with her family, and until I was incarcerated for refusing to accept my responsibility. But with the group discussions, I took the decision and I contacted the family I betrayed, I told them everything, and how I called the killers who came and killed that person.

This confession motivated them to forgive me and a person who had come with the survivors who had come to grant us forgiveness, mentioned that s/he also knew that information, and was happy that I had now agreed to tell the truth. I, too, was relieved, because you see that even the leaders saw that I was

transformed for the better, and even the family forgave me. I was in denial, yet those I called to kill the person were the ones who accused me, and the entire village knew it. I am peaceful now, even though I cannot resurrect that person, I am forgiven, and my heart also feels relieved.”

9. **ME** said “All is my fault. I pleaded guilty to the crimes I committed, I apologized for them and I was sentenced to do community work (community service as an alternative penalty to imprisonment). In the middle of the sentence, I went to Burundi. I ran away from community work, without telling anyone, I spent 3 months there, and then I came back. Therefore, they arrested and imprisoned me because I escaped community work. As I had already pleaded guilty and asked for forgiveness, I want to apologize to the family I betrayed. This will help me to live well with them once I finish serving my sentence. However, apart from the fact that I failed to complete community work, I had already admitted my crimes. Apologizing will set me free, and it will help me to live well with those I betrayed as we used to, because I will be humble to them.”
10. **UJ**, a native of Nyaruguru District, incarcerated in Huye prison since 2000 and serving a 25-year sentence, explained how he and his friend killed a person. He said, “I was sharing banana beer with **CC**, we remembered about someone who hadn’t been yet killed. The two of us immediately went to his home. When we got there, he asked me “stranger”, “Do you come to kill me? “I replied, “You guessed right.” Afterward, I held him, and **CC** stabbed him, and we killed him. We were two to kill him; we were not in a group. I apologize to his close relatives for the abominable crime we committed. We have no one else to blame, the guilt and shame are on us. And we have understood that a genuine apology is what leads to reconciliation, and brings relief to all, both the perpetrators and the victims. We were taught this in “Ndi Umunyarwanda/I am Rwandan” program and in mentioned therapeutic groups. I am very ready to ask for forgiveness, and I can’t just escape my crime. I take full responsibility, and it saddens me. I want to apologize to those I betrayed.”
11. An inmate at Huye Prison said, “I enjoyed the dialogues we had in

the therapeutic groups, they helped me. Thanks to those dialogues, I felt that I had to humble myself in order to live well with others. I had a problem that burdened me because the wife I left home remarried a neighbor. I understood that I had to humble myself and be compassionate with her. When I will be released, I will not fight with them, we will find a mutual agreement as neighbors. However, before joining the group I was very angry, I felt that when I return home, I would attack them and fight them, but I realized that the conflicts do not resolve any issue, but there was a way to accept what happened to us and try to live in peace with others. Acceptance really gave me peace of mind; I will come home without anger. After all, we have been sentenced for so many years, and we are responsible for this situation. I have decided to live in peace with those I will join at home. "

12. During the therapy group, an inmate from Huye Prison said, "I agree to apologize to those I killed their family members, but I had a problem: after my imprisonment, my family abandoned me and my siblings don't visit me, until my mother dies and no one informs me. I learned from my colleagues that, my siblings shared all the family properties. The information has provided by prisoners' family members, and who are neighbors of my family, coming to visit theirs in detention. I also want to apologize to my family because I made them ashamed and I guess that's why they have never visited me. Will you (he meant the DiDé Foundation) tell them that I want them to forgive me, and I will not claim any property? "
13. A detainee from Nyaruguru District admits having been involved in the killings of many people in his home Sector. He explains that in addition to expressing his apology, he has been involved in the process of indicating where they put those who were killed during the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi.
The wife of the inmate to whom we named NJB, died while he was in prison.

NJB is a prisoner from Nyaruguru District who has been imprisoned since 1995 for the crime of genocide against the Tutsi.

He is currently incarcerated in Rusizi Prison and had also been detained in Huye Prison. He is serving a 28-year sentence; he has served 25 years and has three (3) years left to serve. In his testimony, he says: "I joined the attack we coordinated ourselves; it didn't come from anywhere else. We were a group of 15 people, but I remember well 10 people. We killed a lot of people including 7 people who had spent more than two weeks at « K »'s home. We lined them up and put them in a ditch, we covered it with dirt. We never dug. « K » was the one who asked us: "Come and take these cockroaches out of here. Then we went, and brought all of them in that attack we were part of, and we killed them." There were others we threw in the latrine. But I've already revealed where those ones were and they were extracted from there. There was also a time when we asked another gang for backup, and the organizer rewarded whoever participated in the attack with cows owned by the targeted person we had just killed. I apologize for that abhorrent crime I committed, in different places. I am really ready to collaborate with others to promote reconciliation and development. "

14. An inmate at Rusizi Prison, during the group discussions, shared his testimony with his peers. He is the one who supports group members to make progress towards reconciliation. He said "You are complaining that your neighbor took your wife; first finish serving your sentence, the rest will be resolved. To say that your wife is in love with another is not a serious problem here. After all, we are just blaming them! You who have been here for 20 years, you left a very young wife, had it been you, would you still be there waiting? And remember that she even visits you. My wife is home, but she had two children in my absence. And what saddens me the most, is that her new partner is an incompetent guy; a man who can't even afford a cradle for his own child!

So, after giving birth she was too embarrassed to come back to visit me. But I asked a neighbor, a former family friend to ask her to come to visit me, and that there was no problem. This was after she gave birth to the second child, as she had not visited me since she gave birth to the first child. The neighbor gave him the

message, and then the woman came and brought the baby, carrying him on his back in a deplorable cloth. When I greeted her, I asked to greet the child. As we were talking, in the middle of the conversation, I said things I regretted; I told her if you had to cheat, you should at least have standards; these words came out of nowhere, maybe it was due to the sadness, but we had had a good conversation, and I felt happy. But when we finished talking, and after she handed me what she had brought me, I asked her to wait for me so I can give her the money to buy cloth to carry the baby on her back. So, when I left, I went to the "social services" and asked for money, and when I came back, I looked for her and she was nowhere to be found and since then she still hasn't come back. "

I still want to send her a message to come back so we can talk before I return home. Yes, it is sad that another man lives with my wife but I also have played a role in that situation. I am grateful that my wife did not abandon my home and my children. Now they are young men.

So, you too have to be patient, your wife lives with your neighbor, it is an easy situation. When you go home, please find the right solution. And don't go there creating chaos, work with the family to find a solution.

15. Another inmate at Rusizi Prison, whom we named **BB**, a native of Nyamasheke District, said, "During the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi, I was a young boy, 20 years old, I was a security guard somewhere. When the killers came, they told me that I was not helping them. I told them I couldn't leave the job, but they refused to hear that, so they immediately took me with them. We went together; they told me that we were hiding cockroaches in my home, which was the reason why I wasn't helping them. We headed home and when we reached there, they ordered me to call my father to ask him to open the door, and I called him, saying that it was me. When I called, the killers pulled me back, grabbed me, and then when my father opened thinking he was opening for me, they immediately entered, they immediately grabbed my stepmother and killed her there. I was part of that attack that

killed her because it is me who asked dad to open the door. My half-sisters were orphaned because of my involvement in my stepmother's murder. During the activity of asking for forgiveness here at the prison, I was happy to see my father's brother-in-law coming to forgive me, and the one who came to forgive me is my stepmother's brother. And he really forgave me, because he treated me like his own child. Not only did he come to forgive me, but also on other days, he usually sends me messages through my half-sisters when they come to visit me, and he even gives them food to bring to me."

16. MD was incarcerated in 2007 and sentenced to 15 years.

MD, who is incarcerated in Rusizi Prison, was a Protestant Church pastor during the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi. Afraid of being seen in groups that carried out the attacks, he sent a former catechist to the church to join others in the attacks. He also explains that there was a child he co-plotted against, who was killed. He also explains the problem he had with one of the prisoners who was bearing false witness to him, and he also said that they later resolved the issue.

"I had two achings: the aching of the person who was bearing false witness to me, and the aching rooted in the fear of apologizing to the one I had betrayed because she used to come and visit others, but would not reach me. So now, the one who was bearing false witness to me is incarcerated here, but because of the therapeutic group he is part of, the time came and he apologized to me for lying about me, and I forgave him because the groups helped me understand the importance of apologizing and forgiving. I sent a message to the person I betrayed, they came and even forgave me. I had failed to humble myself and ask them for forgiveness. She would also come here and only talk with those who apologized to her. Right now, my heart is clean because she forgave me. Even if I would have to see her again, I would not be afraid or ashamed because I apologized to her, and she forgave me."

- 17.** The inmate also described how being part of the group liberated him, saying, "Discussing with others in groups helped me a lot. It

allowed me to understand my role in the Genocide, and I came to understand how apologizing liberates.”

I no longer feel anxious because I apologized, and they forgave me. While before I joined the group, I felt the day I would finish serving my sentence, I would never return to my former neighborhood, I felt I would find another place where to live. After meeting those I have betrayed and apologizing to them when I look at how they have forgiven me and received me, I have now changed my mindset. The day I finish serving my sentence, which is soon, I will definitely return to my home village and live well with others as I used before the Genocide against the Tutsi.”

2.2. Testimonies from beneficiaries during reconciliation events

Some of the detainees have taken steps towards apologizing in public. This activity was followed by the process of granting forgiveness by those who were asked to forgive; it was also held in public. In this section, we have statements of those who asked for forgiveness, as well as what the person who forgave said about it.

Some of the testimonies are shown below:

1. At the time of granting forgiveness in Rusizi, two families decided to meet those who had been betrayed by their fathers so they could come and forgive them. The three families of survivors agreed, and then made a trip to come and meet others who had come to ask for/offer forgiveness in the prison. This example illustrates how Rwandans of all backgrounds are willing to live well together and live beyond what separated them during the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi.

A prisoner’s family member said, “We came here to apologize. We heard that there was a program aimed at asking for forgiveness, but the facilitators have not been able to reach out to us, although our parents had written to those they had betrayed. We asked details about the program to the others who had planned to join the inmates from their families, and our neighbors who were to come to apologize, explained it to us. So,

we decided to go and meet those betrayed by our fathers, asking them to come and forgive them, they accepted, and now we have come together, they came to forgive our fathers. It is three people who came to forgive our fathers. We thank them very much, and we thank them for the way our families have lived well together, even though our parents have betrayed them.”

2. A woman from Nyamagabe apologized to her step-mother for the killing of her son she had brought at her father’s place. She said, “I apologize to my step-mother for the role I played in the murder of her son ... my role was to indicate that the mother had brought the child to my father’s place. I apologize to my step- mother for denying her child, **NE**, and that contributed to the child being killed. I continuously felt the burden of that crime. If God helps me to get out of here and return to the Rwandan society, I am determined to become her child and she will be my mother I without any mistrust”.

The mother whose child was killed also said, “When the killers came, the child **NE** ran to her. The killers asked him, “Where are you going?” “I’m going to my sister’s,” he replied. They added, “If she denies you, we will kill you.” When the child arrived, she immediately told him, “We are not relatives; your mother brought you to my father’s house.” This is how they immediately killed him. I forgive you, from the bottom of my heart. I also forgave you while in Cyanguu.” (The female inmate was initially detained at Rusizi Prison).

3. At Nyamagabe Prison, a young man who spoke on behalf of prisoners’ families said, “I started carrying babies on my back on behalf of my mum from the time she was still a young woman, I was studying, I dropped out of school. So, the fact that today this step has been made, and my mother agreed to apologize, it’s extraordinary. My mother would always apologize to me, but I hadn’t yet forgiven her, because she hadn’t forgiven others either (forgiveness he talked about refers to apologizing to those she betrayed). Today, because she apologized to those she betrayed, I also forgave her.”

4. A young man whose father is incarcerated in Rusizi prison, said, "I apologize because our families committed atrocities during the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi. I grew up without a father at home, but no one explained to me why. When I grew up, I studied, and even the Government paid for my education. They didn't care about the crimes my father committed. At this age, my father has never told us he was imprisoned because of the people he killed. A few days ago, a facilitator came to see me and told me, "Your father would like to apologize to those he betrayed, and he would like you to be present." "I was shocked because I had never heard him admitting his role in the Genocide. His apology will help us reconcile with the families we have always felt they falsely accused my father. And I thank the mother who agreed to forgive my father." (He was referring to the mother who had come to forgive his father).

5. At Huye prison, the one who spoke on behalf of the prisoners' families was a young man who was raised in a family his father has betrayed. He said, "I thank a lot, my foster family, while my father betrayed them and killed their parent. Even now I accompanied my foster parent who came to forgive my father, because that's where I live. He is the one who raised me from a young age when my father was imprisoned, and my mother died. I didn't miss anything ("from this foster family"), now I am a man. I thank all the survivors, including the father who raised me, without caring about what my father did to him, and who agreed to forgive our families who betrayed them."

2.3. Testimonies from inmates of Rusizi prison after asking for forgiveness in public

In this section, we find the testimonies of detainees who took the initiative to invite those they betrayed to present them their apology and took the time to talk to those they invited and who forgave them during an event held at Rusizi Men's Prison. The event was followed by an activity of apologizing in Nyamasheke District, where they committed the crimes.

After apologizing at the scene of the crime, in Nyamasheke District, the detainees shared their feelings, how they appreciated the event, , their wishes on the event carried out and on other similar events planned, as we will see in the following testimonies.

I. Inmate WA: Sentenced to 30 years in 1997

In giving us his testimony, he used the Kinyarwanda proverb “Wisdom comes after ignorance has passed” (you learn by mistakes).

After presenting their apology in Bushenge Sector, Nyamasheke District where he is originally from, **WA** said in a very emotional voice, “It’s true that knowledge is sharable.” “Since 1998, I have been hardening my heart. Those who have agreed to apologize in recent years have left me here; back in 2003, 2004, and 2005, those who apologized, while I was stubborn, have returned home, while they come from my village, we had committed similar crimes.

Also, in 2014, others apologized at Rusizi Stadium, and even after those who apologized met at the prison to discuss; all of that time I was still stubborn.

But at the time, my friend who is also incarcerated here in Rusizi named “**UJ**” asked me, ‘Don’t you think you have committed any crime to apologize for?’ This is the person who incited me to do an introspective analysis; I looked at how all the people from my village had apologized, and how many of them have returned home, that is how I also took the decision.

I started with the Prison Fellowship Rwanda program and later continued in the therapeutic groups in collaboration with DiDé Foundation. That's where I got to understand the importance of apologizing, for myself, and especially for those I betrayed, for, I felt that apologizing was like raising grudges. However, at that time, I would always feel the guilt and shame that pushed me to keep hiding from the people in my village. When I would see people from my village being visited here in prison, I tried to walk away from them, because most visited people were those who had apologized during all of that time I hadn't yet understood that concept, but really, I was stubborn. And I was wondering how I was going to return home, knowing that I had been involved in the killings of so many women whom killers had refused to kill before, and we ended up killing them at the very last minute.

Another thing that helped me was the message delivered by the representative of IBUKA when they came to forgive us in the prison. The message gave us courage, where he told us that the ones we had betrayed were ready to forgive us and to live well with us again; and that they had even forgiven us before we asked for forgiveness. That was constructive to me. I was very happy of the step I made, and I feel that even those I apologized to felt relieved, because they must have always wondered how my peers have always apologized and I hadn't, while we committed the crimes together. I was able to talk to a few of them, and I saw them talking to me without any mistrust, while I was expecting no one would want to talk to me.

“What will be fully cooked begins with warming up” (Rwandan proverb which means “What will go well is reflected in the preceding signs” or “there is always signs for any happening”); I saw how **KA** came to forgive me in prison, how we talked, how he forgave me, and I felt liberated. Today I am light-hearted and I feel free. That's why I started by saying that “Wisdom comes after ignorance” (Rwandan proverb which means you learn by mistake) I've realized how, for a long time, I had chained myself. And the day I apologized, my little sister was there, it was wonderful. After being forgiven by **KA** we had a dialogue. It was amazing. When we

went to apologize in my home village, I knew I would meet with **KA** and had a good conversation with him without problem, because he had shown that he forgave me. The only problem I had was to face the general population [knowing what I had done]. But the way they received and talked to me, the way I was forgiven by the neighbor I had betrayed, and the fact that even my family came to the venue where we asked for forgiveness, were very constructive experiences to me.

Now that I feel free, I am serving my sentence with a peaceful heart, because I know that when I finish it, I will return to live with my family, in peace. I even kept my family from the shame caused by my resistance to asking for forgiveness

- 2. Inmate MT:** Incarcerated since 1994, sentenced to 30 years. Now he has four years before being released (March 2020): His testimony shows how time resolves issues, and how what a person focuses on leads to results.

He said, “I have a secret to apologize for, because from the 28/8/2000 I decided to apologize, but those I apologized to were not yet ready. But after various lessons we received, and after sending to them several messages asking them to forgive me, they took the decision, and agreed to forgive me.”

“I have been following various programs that encouraged us to apologize. These include the Catholic Church’s justice and peace program; I was part of that program, I followed its teachings that encouraged us to make peace with ourselves, reconcile with different people by apologizing to them, and then with God. I then followed the trainings of the “NdiUmunyarwanda/ (I am Rwandan)” program that also works here in prison, encouraging us to focus on what unites us than what divides us as Rwandan citizens. So, during that entire time, I never had the opportunity to meet with those I betrayed and apologize. In the Justice and Peace program where we met at Rusizi Stadium, they were not able to come, but I never got to know why they did not come. They didn’t also make it for the second time, while I had written to him. When the therapeutic groups were initiated, I wrote to them

again. That's when they were able to come, we had a chance to talk, I asked them to forgive me and they granted me forgiveness. Going to apologize in my home village was a way to reinforce the forgiveness I was granted while in prison. I was set free the day they came to prison, we talked, I apologized and they forgave me in the presence of my wife, who was listening.

When we went to apologize in Bushenge (Nyamasheke district), I was lucky, those I wanted to apologize to sat next to me, and we talked, and I was shocked to hear that they were giving me a gift: as my wife had relocated, and the family I apologized to lives in the village near our former residence, the said family promised me that once my sentence was over, I should come and they would give me a piece of land, where I could build a house close to theirs, and we will be neighbors again.

That made me happy, and it showed me that even though it took them a while to forgive me, now they have forgiven me.

Other programs have helped us a lot; we are becoming more and more aware of the importance of asking for forgiveness. But what this program helped me with was that they were able to reach out to those I was apologizing to. They passed them the message I had sent them, explained to them that I wanted to ask them for forgiveness, and they were able to connect us. And the group has been supportive, they encouraged, because before this program, I would send messages to those had betrayed and would never come. But you understand that it worked out well, and I ended up getting a part of an inheritance.

3. Prisoner HF: Incarcerated since 1996, sentenced to 30 years.

This testimony shows **HF's** difficult journey towards an apology. After a long time of hesitation, ignorance, and skepticism, caused by the mistrust that the process of confessing the crimes he

committed during the Genocide, would yield any results, it led to a brave decision to apologize and reconcile with those he betrayed. According to him, after joining the therapeutic groups, it is when he was able to decide to apologize; an idea he had been contemplating for the previous 7 years.

He said, "I've been part of these programs aimed at asking for forgiveness for the last seven (7) years, but in the beginning, I struggled to understand their purpose. During all of that time, I had a problem with the fact that one day I will have to live again with the people I had betrayed. I wasn't able to apologize, but also, I didn't have anyone to advise me. The benefit of these teachings (therapeutic groups) is that apologizing relieves; I decided to apologize while participating in the groups. I have learned from the testimonies of the group members who had gotten, before me, to know the secret of apologizing. I would listen to how they dared to apologize, I learned that they no longer had suspicions against those they were apologized to and when I would think about how peaceless I felt while thinking about those I betrayed, I made a decision (of asking for forgiveness).

What I used to avoid, I refused to think about it because it disturbed my peace, I agreed to make it public. Then I first talked to the members of the group, who also encouraged me to apologize to those I had betrayed. So, I was able to rest the day I sent them a message and saw them coming. I told them the crime I committed against them by killing their relatives, and then apologized, humbly. They forgave me, and I felt relieved. I used to shy away due to a limited understanding. But now I have rested." He added, "My family also encouraged me to apologize, and even those who encouraged us to apologize were in groups (facilitators trained by DiDé Foundation) and I felt that were authentic."

He concluded, saying, "I have been here for 25 years, but yesterday when we went to apologize, I was delighted by the progress our country has made," What beautiful houses, the paved road leading to our hospital. It's great. This is the first time I've gotten a ride in a car like this. "(He was referring to a coaster that

took prisoners to apologize)".

4. Prisoner AH: incarcerated in 1997, sentenced to life imprisonment but wanted to apologize to those he betrayed, he started this journey supported by the "Prison Fellowship Rwanda" program. This prisoner's statement highlights how the Genocide has led to the occurrence of divisions, hatred, and divisions within some families. But on the other hand, it highlights the role of the family in helping inmates to reconcile with the families they betrayed as we will hear in **AH's** testimony. Despite that he was sentenced to life imprisonment, the prisoner apologized to those he had betrayed, and he also would like to apologize to his family because, after his incarceration resulting from the crimes he committed, they rejected him.

"I am serving life imprisonment, but the training I received continued to touch my heart and I felt the need to set myself free. We were previously in a group of 18 people (he refers to the period when he was supported by the Prison Fellowship Rwanda program). Fortunately, DiDé continues to help us."

Thanks to these groups, I was able to forgive the person who testified against me, who is also incarcerated in this prison, because I had treated him as an enemy (he was referring to the prisoner who testified against him and they both committed similar crimes), while I did commit the crime I was accused of during the Gacaca¹ trials. Holding a grudge against him unfairly would also trouble my peace. But within the groups, I was able to understand that apologizing frees one's heart.

After participating in the groups, I disclosed to them the crime I had committed, without feeling ready to look into the eyes of the person I had betrayed. But as I continue to observe the group's discussions, I have realized that the weight of the guilt I felt about the crime I committed would give me a heart attack. As I talked to the group, I felt relieved; then I decided to send a message to the one I betrayed. I first sent my nephew to them, and he was

warmly received, and that gave me hope. I later came to write to him through this program. He came with other people, who had come to forgive us, and he told me that the fact that I have apologized to him made him happy, yet it also gave me peace, now my heart feels light.

AH continued saying: “After I was incarcerated, my wife left, and she remarried. But her husband passed, and after that, we were able to talk again. She even came to visit me. She only came once and never returned. If my wife accepts it, we will again live together. Now the goal is reconciliation, not fights; what happened to us all is complex, reconciliation is the only thing that matters. My nephew participated in all of this (apologizing and wanting his wife back) because he was the only one who has never left me, he visited me and encouraged me to apologize to those I betrayed, because everyone else in my family hates me. But the fact that I was able to reconcile with the one I betrayed, and even my peer incarcerated with me was the first step. Now I want to reconcile with my family.”

He added, “When we went to apologize, I was happy to meet people from my village, I was able to greet some, even though they were many we would not greet them all. I am also pleased that they thanked us for taking the step to apologize, and were able to forgive while it was us who betrayed them. If it could depend on them, they would like to see us being released from prison so we can live well together as we used in the past.”

He concluded by saying, “After apologizing, I talked to my friends, and when they heard how we were welcomed, it made them happy. Some even want to join groups to embark on the journey of asking for forgiveness.”

5. Prisoner ME: was incarcerated in 2007, sentenced to 15 years

ME was surprised by the progress made by the survivors of the Genocide against the Tutsi towards unity and reconciliation, starting from what he saw on the day of the public apology, while he expected that they might not even respond to the invitation of

forgiving him. And of course, apologizing and forgiving is an action you can't predict the results of before it happens.

He said, "They told us to contact those we had betrayed so they could come and we would apologize to them and I thought they would never come. Seeing them in attendance made me very happy and relieved. They told me that if I had pleaded guilty earlier, I would have been released from prison. My family also told me that they live well with those I had betrayed as we did before the 1994 Genocide. Because my wife is very old, my daughter is the one who visits me.

When the people we betrayed came to forgive us, there is a man to whom I gave a gift to thank him for agreeing to forgive me. He came as the representative of the entire family, so when we went to apologize at the place where we committed the crime, in Bushenge, that man brought me a kilogram of sugar; we [prisoners] are not as civilized, the country has developed a lot."

6. Prisoner BS: incarcerated in 2008, sentenced to 14 years

In **BS's** testimony, he indicated that he understood that apologizing was a step towards reconciliation, which is different from pleading guilty because you've lost the case. He said he made progress with the help of the therapeutic group he was part of. Similar to his peers he went to Bushenge with, he was also touched by the progress made by the survivors of the Genocide against the Tutsi.

He said, "I felt that I wasn't concerned by the groups because I had apologized in Gacaca trials. But being in the group helped me understand the act of a sincere apology, doesn't take place during a trial. So, my apology was thought out, not merely a ceremony; I need to be reunited with my comrades, apologizing to them and I would feel relieved, and show my love for those I have betrayed, so that they too can be relieved and we can reunite, as we used. Going to apologize where I committed the crime was easy because I solved the issue with the person I betrayed. And our conversation with the one I offended showed me that apologizing was effective."

“After I apologized at the place from where the crime was committed, in Bushenge (Nyamasheke district), something touched my heart: the mother I betrayed had a child killed in the Nyamasheke parish where he had taken refuge. So, when we went to apologize, the mother gave me a thousand francs to buy sugar; yet before I was imprisoned, we were neighbors and I never visited them or helped them in any way. These were the people with whom I prayed in the Adventist church. I realized I still have progress to make: I should wear a "Red Cross" cloth where there are problems, and stand to resolve any conflict, to replicate the great example I have learned from her, a lesson of humanity. ”

7. Prisoner MD: imprisoned in 2007, sentenced to 15 years

It is obvious that many Rwandans are trying to overcome the challenges that affected them and strive to live and this is seen among Rwandans of different backgrounds and it is a shared culture where whoever is offered the kindness strives to give it back. **MD** was surprised by the attitude he saw among the survivors, as well as other community members from where they went to apologize from, this motivated him to continue to take steps towards asking for forgiveness to others he did not remember. Also, as **MD** points out, people need each other.

He said, “I appreciate the way you care for us; the role you played in this process by taking care of those we have betrayed, as well as our families. I feel happy seeing my wife coming with those I offended, when they came to forgive me. They came together all the time (to the prison and to Bushenge where we went to apologize).” He added, “We want the therapeutic groups to continue. Because there are other people we betrayed but we have forgotten their names due to time intervals. These include those we met in Bushenge, or those our families are constantly reminding us about. If the groups continue, we will be able to apologize to them.” “You know they even show us the children of the people we betrayed, and we found out they have become men!” These are the people we didn’t know before so we could apologize to them. But we should also apologize to them because they have grown up, some of whom [male & female] have gotten

married. Others are adults so apologizing will help us, they will also forgive us, and we will live well together.”

8. Inmate SM: incarcerated in 2008, sentenced to 25 years.

SM is an old man of over 80, apparently weak. He was involved in an attack which killed a man who had come to hide in the forest located in the Ruharambuga sector (located in the Nyamasheke district). This old man explained that he did not know the victim, because he had come from far away. While sharing his thoughts with his peers, this old man expressed himself in a few words, but which contained a relevant message. “I was accused by the wife of the man we found in the forest, where he had come to hide. I do not know his name, because he had come a long way, and we are accused by his wife; I think they call her “Mama Bebe”.

I participated in an attack made up of many people and accompanied by the communal brigadier. We discovered the victim and the sergeant took him at the commune where he had been killed. However, if he had not taken him, we ourselves would not have let him go, we would have killed him.

I met Mama Bebe in prison, I apologized to her, and she forgave me. We also went to Bushenge and those we apologized for told us they would grant us forgiveness. "Now, even though I can't look inside my heart, I feel it's clean," he concluded.

III. CONCLUSION

This booklet is a collection of testimonies provided by beneficiaries since the start of the intervention in June 2019. This collection of testimonies from beneficiaries who started the process to ask for forgiveness is useful: it shows the beneficiaries' journey; as well as the assistance from partners in the reconciliation process.

Although most testimonies were collected among detainees participating in therapeutic groups, additional testimonies were collected among other beneficiaries, notably survivors and the family members of prisoners. The author has tried to be faithful to the speeches of the beneficiaries as much as possible using their own words, in order to bring out their ideas as they expressed them.

Finally, with regard to the length of prison sentences, there are cases where some detainees were arrested provisionally released for a certain period of time. When these have been found guilty and sentenced by a competent court after this provisional release, they were still arrested. In such cases, the total duration of detention is counted from the date of the previous detention, taking into account the actual time spent in detention (Deducting the release time between the two detention periods). If you, who are reading these testimonies, find cases where the length of detention seems longer than expected, it is because the individuals concerned fall into this category. Indeed, in the framework of the assistance provided to beneficiaries belonging to therapeutic groups, DIDE assisted them to also protect and recognize their rights, including information on the length of their detention.

ⁱThe term 'gacaca' can be translated as 'short grass' referring to the public space where neighborhood male elders (abagabo) used to meet to solve local problems. The name of this system was then adopted in 2001 as the title of the state's new criminal justice system "Gacaca Courts" (Inkiko Gacaca) to try those deemed responsible for the 1994 genocide against Tutsi.

