



## **PROTESTANT COUNCIL OF RWANDA (C.P.R.)**

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## **International Conference on Peace Education at Protestant Schools as a Contribution to Learning for Sustainability**

### **- Executive Summary -**

From November 05-07, 2017 more than 50 members of GPNreformation and the Protestant Council of Rwanda (CPR) from 18 countries came to Kigali, Rwanda, to learn about concepts facing Peace Education at Protestant schools as well as to discuss and develop new approaches from a global perspective.

By carrying-out the conference in Africa, the importance of this continent and its numerous Christian schools for Protestant education was underlined. Especially Rwanda, the country of the genocide against the Tutsi population in 1994, symbolizes challenges Protestant schools are facing as well as approaches to peace education.

### **Session 1: Welcome and Service**

The opening remarks were given by Rev. Samuel Mutabazi, Head of the National Office of Education of Protestant Council of Churches (Rwanda) and Rev. Dr. Birgit Sandler-Koschel, Head of the Department of Education of the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD). Prof. Annette Scheunpflug and Dr. Wim Kuiper from the former GPNreformation steering committee clarified the objectives of the conference: to reflect on concepts of Protestant schools in overcoming conflicts and working on reconciliation; to deliberate on the contribution of Protestant schools to the wellbeing and social cohesion of societies and to make this contribution visible; to share ideas and concepts in regard to peace education and education for sustainability in Protestant schools; to gain insights into current challenges of peace education in the Great Lake Region and to learn from the contribution of the churches; to develop and to strengthen the Protestant network GPNreformation.

A visit of the Sunday service in the Presbyterian Church at Kiyovu parish completed the first session.

### **Session 2: Experiences of Conflict in the Field of Protestant Education**

A special focus of the conference was set on social and political conflicts as they have a huge impact on education. The question how Protestant education might contribute to peace and stability was examined by experiences from South Sudan, DR Congo, Burundi, Cameroon, Poland and Brazil.

#### **Challenge A: Protestant Education in South Sudan**

Because of the civil war, thousands of children have been interrupted from education in South Sudan since 2013. To restore and develop the school system and the education of the population, the approaches of constructing and rehabilitating primary schools, of developing and reviewing a primary educational curriculum and of providing "emergency education" in camps in areas affected by conflicts (2013-2017) and others are pursued.

#### Challenge B: **Protestant Education in the Kivu Region**

The recognition and legitimacy of Protestant schools in the Kivu Region have come a long way. Today, there are various Protestant schools. But because of the lack of a clear vision of Protestant education, these schools still face many challenges, like the focus on quantity rather than quality, the lack of qualified teachers and the gain-centered character of education. By focusing on a holistic and moral, spiritual, intellectual and social development, a new perspective is pursued: Christ-centered schools are emphasized, chaplaincy is empowered, learner-centered methodologies of teaching are used, learners' competences are raised and trainings of teachers are forced.

#### Challenge C: **The Anglophone Crisis in Cameroon**

By changing the form of state from federal to republic, the Anglophone zone of Cameroon was assimilated by manipulations of the government. Protests from the Anglophone part of the population resulted and led in October 2016 to a conflict including reactions of violence as militarization, the burning of schools and propaganda against Anglophones.

To overcome these conflicts, new perspectives that include a genuine, open and inclusive dialogue and an education of non-violent approaches are pursued.

#### Challenge D: **Minority Conflicts in Poland**

In Poland the Protestant population as well as Protestant Schools are a minority which has been marginalized by the catholic majority in different ways. Their experiences show that it needs a clear understanding of the own identity as well as an emphasis on similarities with the others. A Protestant education in the spirit of ecumenism and the involvement in society can pave the way to an integrated community.

#### Challenge E: **The Tension between Poverty and Wealth as a Challenge for Protestant Education in Brazil**

Brazil, a nation with 27 districts, faces many problems concerning the imbalance between poor and rich. The corruption is at a high rate, criminalities, unemployment, lack of insurance, overcrowded prisons, drug abuse, theft and rape are just some of the consequences.

As the government is not well equipped to handle these challenges, Protestant education has an important role. Shared values like mentioned in the Position Paper of GPENreformation are the basis for further developments.

### Session 3: **Pedagogy of Remembrance and Reconciliation**

A keynote about the Rwandan Pedagogy of Remembrance and Reconciliation was combined with a visit of the Genocide Memorial Center in Kigali and pointed out initial approaches regarding this topic.

#### Theory A: **Education of Remembrance**

Education of remembrance introduces the history and the current situation to the young generation and imparts the responsibility a society has for (past) crimes and sufferings. The recognition of this responsibility is an important aspect of education in a democratic citizenship.

The Rwandan history and its approaches to an education of remembrance became more concrete and experienceable for the participants of the conference during the visit of the Kigali Memorial Center at Gisozi.

## Session 4: **Protestant Responses and Ideas**

After an introduction to the foundations of peace education, the participants were introduced to answers and ideas for a peace building education: the Participatory and Active Pedagogy in the Great Lake Region in Africa and within workshops examples from Rwanda, Egypt, DR Congo, Cameroon and Germany.

### Theory B: **Foundations of Peace Education**

The aspects of peace education are remembrance, peaceful relationships, autonomy and self-responsibility, democratic forms of conflict resolution. To implement these concepts of peace education successfully, it is necessary to look at your own starting point (e.g. political or own reflection), to broaden your perspective to other concepts (individual personality), to understand peace education as an intergenerational perspective (each generation should address it), to adopt peace education concepts for making a change in society, to share with other schools in other parts of the world, to give peace education roots in Christian faith and to use the network for lobbying.

### Approach A: **Participatory and Active Pedagogy (PAP) in the Great Lake Region as Protestant Contribution to Peace Education**

PAP is a peace education approach, developed in Rwanda and extended to DR Congo. During the last years it reached a high number of Protestant schools. The PAP program was introduced as a response to the critical educational situation after the genocide against the Tutsi population.

Throughout trainings on diagnostic, communication and didactical tools, students learn about trauma, phases of mourning and non-aggressive ways of conflict resolution. The learner-centered pedagogy is leading to more opportunities for students.

### Approach B: **Experiences from Anti-Trauma Work in Rwanda**

The anti-trauma work in Rwanda contributed to start initiatives for peace building, telling the truth, empathy and goodwill to live together and the improvement of social relations. It facilitated the process of reconciliation.

### Approach C: **Experiences from Implementing PAP in Schools**

The PAP has contributed much in teaching improvement, constructive feedback, self-esteem, positive climate in schools, less violence, etc.

### Approach D: **Religious Education and Reconciliation**

Education and religion are serving the same purpose: to create good and virtuous citizens. Therefore, Reformers support education and its role as a link between the church and the private homes. Religious Education helps people respect the human dignity, appreciate differences in race, diverse views and cultures. The aim of Religious education should be to promote peace, tolerance, unity and reconciliation. In Rwanda, Religious education has contributed to self-esteem, mutual acceptance and overcoming stereotypes and pursue of morality.

### Approach E: **Interreligious Education**

The experiences from Cairo show that Protestant schools should emphasize the interreligious atmosphere for mutual respect and understanding. Students as well as teachers should find a way to understand each other, to be flexible and to learn from each other. 90 % of students in the German Protestant School in Cairo are Muslims. Muslim and Christian teachers cooperate on common items like creation ethics or Jesus. By exploring the meaning of different religions and forms of belief, students start to appreciate commonalities and find ground for an interreligious dialogue.

## Session 5: **GPENreformation as a Protestant Network of Peace Education**

Besides the thematic work, the attendants worked on the development of the Global Pedagogical Network – Joining in Reformation. As an introduction, the team of GPENreformation gave an overview of past events: the International Conference in Soesterberg in 2016, the World Reformation Exhibition, the International Schools Camp, the International Teachers Academy, the Global schools500reformation Day and Jubilee Celebrations at Protestant schools worldwide in 2017.

Furthermore, the objectives of GPENreformation were announced: The network aims at the warranty and improvement of the educational quality in Protestant schools, seminars and universities and the facilitation of learning in a global context. It wants to deepen the exchange between educational institutions and churches and to promote the interests of Protestant education.

Members of GPENreformation are organized in three groups: Basic members are Protestant schools, seminars and universities. Organizations and associations on national, continental or global level representing Protestant education institutions belong to the constituent members. Finally, individuals who are interested in Protestant education and GPENreformation are called affiliated members. Every contact person of a network member who is willing to build bridges between school life and the network can become an Ambassador. During the conference, GPENreformation could gain 23 new Ambassadors who will represent and support the network in their regions and countries. Additionally, the first Council was mandated: With Dr. Wim Kuiper (the Netherlands), Dr. Jonathan Laabs (USA), Rev. Samuel Mutabazi (Rwanda), Rev. Prof. Dr. Annette Scheunpflug (Germany) and Dr. Birgit Sandler-Koschel (Germany) a multi-national and multi-denominational team will forward and lead the network during the next years.

As future work areas of the network the participants named to extend the network in more schools and places (e.g. Burundi), to implement a round-table of Protestant schools to look back on their foundation, to support tolerance and to improve and to promote a Protestant profile of schools.

Coming back to the topic of peace education in the afternoon, some proven projects were presented during workshops:

### Project A: **Education for sustainability: Experiences from Europe**

Education in Europe in general and particularly in Germany and the Netherlands has contributed to a sustainable development. Schools and universities are places for acquiring knowledge and skills that are transferable to work life and to the needs of the society.

### Project B: **Twinning Schools – Reconciliation by Mutual Exchange**

The main objectives of this project are to promote peace education and Protestant values in Protestant schools at different levels. The project involves students, teachers and administrators from the entities above.

### Project C: **Twinning Schools: Intercultural Experiences between Continents – Experiences of Schools in Cameroon and Germany**

Students from Germany and Cameroon learn from one another through visits, cultural activities and shared experiences. The main objective is to improve education in Protestant schools from different continents.

### Project D: **The Inspirational Question**

We are facing different challenges that need to be overcome and every single person is asked to set priorities. Global learning helps to find answers to the crucial question: "What is the wise thing to do?"