

How the Churches Changed Rwanda After the Devastating Genocide

While secular humanitarian aid organizations abandoned Rwandans during the 1994 genocide, one faith-based organization marched into the country to serve the physical and spiritual needs of the people.

“The church played a very important role [in healing after the genocide],” World Vision Rwanda Programs Director Ananias Sentozi says. “The priority to us was the soul, the heart, the emotions of the people. And I can tell you, there were not other more competent organizations, people or structures or systems that could address those [needs] more than churches.”

World Vision USA recently sponsored a press trip for journalists to see how Rwanda has grown in the last 25 years since the genocide. The international organization was one of the only humanitarian aid groups to enter the country during the genocide and devote its resources to empowering locals and enhancing their daily lives through financial, spiritual and practical services.

In addition to giving Rwandans pots and pans, food, shelter and water, World Vision partnered with churches to teach locals critical biblical values to unite the war-torn country.

“Churches played a role of bringing people together, preaching on forgiveness, preaching on healing wounds, uniting people, bringing people together, praying for all the souls and the healing,” Sentozi said.

As violence died down and the local community courts, called Gacaca courts, set up a justice system, churches pressed in, continuing to walk in compassion.

“[Churches were] coaching, mentoring, visiting, staying close to the people and the number of gatherings that were running here to create awareness of people coming back together, forgiving and living in peace,” Sentozi says.

But where was God while neighbors murdered friends?

“If God is almighty, why didn’t He stop it? If God is a God of love, what did I do to deserve this?” Sentozi says people would ask.

Listen to the podcast to hear his answers and get insight into what is happening in the country right now.

Read more stories from the field here:

“How Holy Spirit Reconciled an Entire Nation Through This Critical Biblical Principle”

“He Chopped Off Her Arm During the Genocide; Now They Preach Forgiveness and Reconciliation”

“They Were Baptizing One Another in Blood”