

Dr John H Steward

Peace and Reconciliation in Rwanda

This presentation combines script and visuals in a reflection on the situation in Rwanda, with emphasis on progress that some people are making towards peace and reconciliation. Through it you will be introduced to a few of the Rwandese people who are contributing to positive change.

After a brief reminder of the genocide experience and the failure of the world's powers to act, the presentation introduces the strategy that the author developed with a team of Rwandese facilitators. Their approach is to work with the willing and invite them to participate in a journey of personal insight, growth and change.

The principles and insights, which have emerged over the past five years are outlined through the lives of two of the victims of 1994. These include the need to move from denial towards grieving my losses, from blaming others to facing my own truth that I wished evil on the other, from thoughts of revenge towards forgiveness.

The energy formerly used to hold a person together as they carry their unresolved pain, starts to be available to support others who need help. Repentance is seen to be a crucial factor in changing attitudes and rebuilding relationships, saying 'sorry' opens a path along which the 'other' may then choose to walk. This is a source of hope in Rwanda where every person has been affected in some way by the genocide and its aftermath.

The author was manager of peace-building and reconciliation for World Vision from March '97 until June 98. Since then he has visited the country every six months to monitor progress, identify and document learnings and mentor staff in the World Vision program.