



Gacaca says...

Aim:

that participants explore the need for conflict to be acknowledged in order for people to build peace.

Age:

8 years and older

Time:

25 minutes

Materials:

cards saying killer, victim or judge, map of the world (optional)

What to do:

Ask if the participants know in what part of the world Rwanda is? Ask them to point it out on the world map. Explain that Rwanda is about the same size as Munster. The population of Munster is 1 million people. Ask what they think the population of Rwanda is. Almost 7.5 million people live in Rwanda.

Sit everyone in a circle. Read out the explanation of gacaca (pronounced ga-CHA-cha). Explain that there has been a conflict in Rwanda in which many people died. The group must identify who are the killers, who are the victims and who the judges are to be. Give each person a card with the words killer, victim or judge. Tell the participants not to show their cards. One person starts and says to different person, 'Gacaca says you are a... victim' (or killer or judge). If the person says yes, then the questioner has another go. If they say no, then the next person has their go. Keep playing until all the participants have had a go and the killers, victims and judges are all identified. Was it difficult to tell who was the victim, killer or judge? Now ask the judges what would be an appropriate punishment for the killers. Ask the victims what they think. Do the killers agree?

If it is appropriate, read out the 'Rwanda 1994 - Present' box and the explanation of genocide. Can the group suggest any other examples of genocide?

Gacaca

The gacaca system (pronounced ga-CHA-cha) is a locally based system of justice developed by the Rwandan government to try to cope with the thousands of people suspected of involvement in the mass killings in Rwanda, who have been held without trial since 1994. The word 'gacaca' is a Kinyarwanda word for grass and refers to the small lawn where elders in a village would congregate to solve family and community conflicts.

Genocide

The killing of certain groups of people with the intention of destroying all or part of their national, religious, racial or ethnic identity is termed genocide.

Rwanda 1994 to Present

Nearly a million people were killed when Hutus attacked Tutsis following the assassination of the Hutu president of Rwanda in 1994. The Tutsis then forced the Hutu leaders to leave and over 2 million Hutus fled the country in just a few days. The Rwandan prison system has been unable to cope with the large number of suspects and many people have died due to overcrowding in the prisons. Now those accused of killings, violence, being accomplices to genocide or looting will be tried under the gacaca system. A person found guilty of murder could receive a sentence of six years in prison followed by community service. This means that some of those held in prison since the 1994 genocide could be released immediately even if found guilty.

Source: BBC Online (2002) and Trócaire.

