

My WFWP work at a Vocational School in Rwanda

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The Rwandan Genocide began on April 7, 1994, three months after we were assigned to Rwanda; this prevented us from immediately entering the country. The conflict between the Tutsis and Hutus continued for a hundred days until the end of July. A million Rwandans were killed. The mass slaughter that occurred during this time is known as the most horrendous massacre in human history. Soldiers and civilians alike engaged in the killings of neighbors, friends and even families for the single reason of having a different ethnicity. The massacre was a cruel one, where people used hatchets and clubs with nails hammered into them as killing tools.

We could enter Rwanda seven months after the end of the war. Even then, the streets smelled of dead bodies, and we could see bullet holes in buildings. Too many people had lost family members and the nation had become spiritless when we started activities. In those days, so many men had died that women made up 70 percent of the population. Educating women and helping them stand on their own feet seemed essential to the development of the country, so we started supporting women to help them become financially independent.

To help the women learn diverse skills, starting from dressmaking, we began building a vocational school in December 1996. The school was completed in July 1998 and opened in August. When the school first opened, many of the students were deeply traumatized; some had seen their parents being killed in front of them; others had seen their own parents carry out a killing. This made it difficult for the students to focus fully on their classes in those days.



Students learning dressmaking

After three years, looking toward the future, we thought it best to transfer the school management, which we had taken care of until then, to the local members. However, the large gap in culture, habits and especially values regarding money and faith were too great and we were unable to wipe out our distrust of the local members. We were divided in our opinions over the idea of transferring the school management. Some approved and some did not, but we thought that time would be our only chance to do it. The first step we had to take was to trust the local members personally. To build a trust relationship with those whom we were transferring the management to, we did everything together for a year and conveyed our serious heart regarding the project. We were so strict when it came to public money management that we even roused hostility; when miscalculations, no matter how small, occurred, we strictly went through everything until we got everything correct, even a single cent. We wanted them to

realize the preciousness of money; however, knowing that conveying it verbally had limits, we showed it in action; this is how desperate our hearts were.

There is still work to do; however, I feel our efforts paid off because locals are managing the school. Even though we started from nothing, the project could go this far because our Heavenly Parent and True Parents were always on our side. It has been sixteen years since the school opened and around 2,600 students have gone through our program. Boasting a forty percent employment rate on average, our school has become famous in Rwanda. Many graduates are standing on their own feet. Sixty-four percent of the National Assembly members are women and this ratio ranks first in the world. Women in Rwanda are exercising their skills and influence in major posts. Since 2007, a project has been in operation, funded by the World Bank, to provide vocational training for ex-combatants. Through the recommendation of female members of the National Assembly, our school was chosen to carry out this project among Rwanda's many vocational schools. We have been given that government commission. The ex-combatants, who were once enemies, are now studying with everyone else in amity. I caught malaria many times during my six years in Rwanda. Once a bug bit me, and the resulting itchiness was unbearably bad. I washed my hair with medicated soap, which caused all my hair to fall out. Physically and psychologically, I hit rock bottom.

Despite such experiences, I had the support of my national messiah, the WFWP headquarters, the ten other volunteers that had been dispatched with me, volunteers sent by the Family Federation and my husband. My husband waited ten years for us to start family after our blessing. Now I have a family and husband that send me off to Rwanda. I am deeply grateful for True Parents' great love because we could continue the project through it. The difficult environment in Africa and with the project brought all the sisters together as family by going through all joy and sorrows. Thanks to my sisters, the idea of "one big family under God," which had just been notional to me, became a reality. Everything I experienced was possible thanks to God's and True Parents' grace.