

Including and Dignifying Hearing-Challenged Citizens

A Day of Face-to-Face Dialogue for the Non-Hearing and Hearing Communities

Facilitated by
Elesse and Virginia Bafandjo

Friday, 01 July, 2016 — Kinshasha, DR Congo



THE DAY TOGETHER

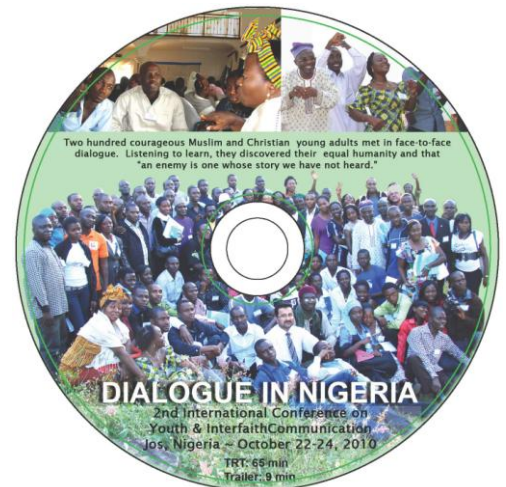
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I. HISTORIC CONTEXT

What inspired this particular face-to-face meeting? Where did this idea come from?

In early 2012 we began walking in the steps of our mentors, Libby and Len Traubman, our initiators into Dialogue and new tools of communication as strong instruments of peacebuilding, love, reconciliation, and inclusiveness for living as a sustainable global community.

The short story is that we are destroying walls and creating bridges between people and community. We are doing our best to respect this recommendation of the Traubmans, who sent to us their DVD of [DIALOGUE IN NIGERIA: Muslims & Christians Creating Their Future](#). We saw solutions for people living together and refusing to be enemies in order to create a harmonious future.



They wrote: *"We are giving you this 2012 how-to documentary film to illustrate what it looks like when diverse citizens – young and old, even enemies – connect, communicate, and change. The principles are universal worldwide, beginning with a new quality of listening-to-learn in homes, institutions, communities, and nations."*



Secondly, in December, 2013, we had the privilege to meet and interpret for Ruth Gould, non-hearing and the Artistic Director of DaDaFest -- <http://www.dadafest.co.uk>, and her English signing interpreter, Beverly. At home in Liverpool, England, Ruth works in the sphere of artistic expression for non-hearing persons.

Ruth was a special guest at the **Non-Hearing Arts Festival of Kinshasa**, invited by Freddy Mata, manager of the sponsoring CPPS -- <http://www.cpps-rdc.com> -- Center for the Production of Programs and Support of Awareness of the Deaf (Centre de Production des programmes et Suports de Sensibilisation des Sourds). They needed Elesse's interpreting assistance during these days.

This was a time of discovering the unimaginable patience, skill, and energy required for accurate multi-lingual conversation, understanding, and communion with hearing and non-hearing citizens.



For example, Ruth used sign language in English. Beverly interpreted the signing into English for Elesse. Elesse then verbally interpreted the English into French to the hearing attendees including one

Congolese who then signed in French to the local non-hearing community.

This was the demanding communication process for many of those 2013 Kinshasa meetings, a TV studio interview, and a special visit to a school of non-hearing students. We travelled with Ruth and others to an economically poor school for non-hearing persons in the Kinshasa district of Ngiri Ngiri.



For the first time, we experienced this unforgettably sad, dark atmosphere. We were amazed how the headmaster and all teachers were non-hearing persons. Our personal interviews penetrated our hearts and awakened us to how they are misunderstood, rejected, and neglected.

The historic July, 2016, Kinshasa face-to-face Dialogue described below was inspired by the above formative experiences of the facilitators that began in 2012.

II. INTRODUCTION

Dialogue communication beginning with compassionate listening can magically bring diverse people closer everywhere. We envision large trees to grow from the seeds of small Dialogue circles we are planting.

Here in Kinshasa, we are determined to keep facilitating these circles of healing even while transcending typical African medical crises and recent floods causing loss of precious audio-visual equipment so important to facilitating Dialogue events.

This time, overcoming mistrust was another kind of challenge. Many non-hearing persons here in Kinshasa, DRC, fear that "other" event organizers are simply looking ways to enrich themselves while exploiting the non-hearing participants. We were not easily accepted.

Thanks to Madam Pauline, an interpreter of non-hearing persons, we gained access to the community of THE ZACHARIA GROUP who were convinced of our honesty after two preparation meetings.

The planned program experienced a false start on Monday, 27 June from 0900 AM until 1300 PM. The hearing community was there on time. Well-prepared, we waited the non-hearing community for five hours. They did not come. We patiently waited in vain.

Just as we were leaving the place, suddenly the non-hearing delegation arrived. They apologized, saying that some participants had school exams. We talked and agreed to work on Friday, 01 July from 0800 AM until around 1400 PM. They apologize and said that some people had exams at school. The appointment was finally respected by everybody.

III. EXPLANATION OF FILM CONTENT: Dialogue in Nigeria

Since 2012 the facilitators had studied and applied the principles of human engagement modelled by 200 diverse women and men in the documentary film-on-DVD -- *DIALOGUE IN NIGERIA: Muslims & Christians Creating Their Future*.

Because recent death-dealing Kinshasa floods had destroyed audio-visual equipment, facilitators did their best to describe in detail and depth the film's instructive content for healing relationships and creating community. While applications for the hearing people (HP) and non-hearing people (NHP) were described and interpreted in sign language, one could see NHP and HP faces light up with interest.

IV. QUESTIONS TO EXPLORE FILM'S PERSONAL MEANING

To assimilate the personal significance for each participant of *DIALOGUE IN NIGERIA*, they answered two questions:

1. What in the content of the DVD as explained, touched you and had a meaning for you?
2. What new possibility or initiative was awakened in you?

Ms Malu (NHP): "I'm touched when I understand that people have decided to refuse being enemies for a sane and better future. I can only do my best to copy their attitude because it is good!"

MS Nahomie (NHP): "I understand that using war is not good because it leads only to great death. I am deciding to help people know that the violent methods are not good because it gives birth only to more death."

Mr Bergu NKU (NHP): "I appreciate the courage of looking for new solutions. I would like to have the same courage and then be more useful in society."

Ms Zola (NHP): "I understand we must construct instead of destroy!"





The hearing community responded:

Md Charlene Bakambana (HP): "I

have understood that the peace is important and we have to create it. The dialogue is a good way to begin communicating to solve conflicts civilly. I decide to work and live for peace everywhere!"

Md Lydie Kurie (HP): "I appreciate the idea of making documentary film or helping communities in conflict. I'm sorry that we cannot see the film! It could more interesting to hear and see. Please, I would like to have the DVD in order to see it!" I encourage people who make films of this sort, when I know that some people spend vast sums for films that do not help. I share this so precious idea and would like to be one of the actresses if there will be other films. As a Christian, I have decided to continue bringing peace and working hard for that."

Mr Dan Laby (HP): "The content of the film as you explained interests me, because people need to change their minds. Then every other things will change. I mean that development will follow. I decide to contribute as much as I can for the change."

Ms Blandine (HP): "The engagement of brothers enemies to see things anew touched me because of your very clear explanation of the DVD content. I am deciding to help people choose for the best way, the dialog!"

V. STRATEGIC QUESTIONS FOR EACH COMMUNITY

We need knowledge of context for healing of the relationship, because life experiences, problems, and needs are different from one group to another, one country to the other. Collectively discovering new social intelligence can reveal strategies that dignify all and serve effective responses for the good of all. We began with **useful questions for the non-hearing community.**



How do hearing persons treat you, and about what do you reproach them in relationship with you?

Ms Malu (NHP): "The HP generally disregard us even if we do not hear but can understand with our eyes. This attitude is hurtful. We NHP do not desire isolation and living separate from our community. They have to understand it please!"

Ms Nahomie (NHP): "We NHP love the HP, but the HP do not love the NHP. This is what troubles and disturbs us."

Mr Bergu Nku (NHP): "The NHP are equally human beings like others. They go to schools and universities. They love the HP. But we are sorry to say that our nation neglects us and does not consider our physical and emotional needs. We suffer general rejection throughout our lives." ed by all and suffer for that.

Zola (NHP): "I'm just happy for this initiative! The HP usually don't bring sustenance to the NHP. They have to understand our state and be merciful, kind and supportive. "



There was a question to the hearing persons:

What is usually not communicated, and about what do you reproach the non-hearing persons in relationship with you?

Md Charlene Bakambana (HP): "The NHP are generally nervous! I don't really know if it is their general state of being. Perhaps they imagine that we do not love them. But to tell the truth, the great wall between them and us is this problem of communication."

Msr Hervé Mekuntima (HP): "Perhaps NHP unnecessarily adopt an attitude that they are inferior to us because they don't hear. They need to be beyond this way of thinking."

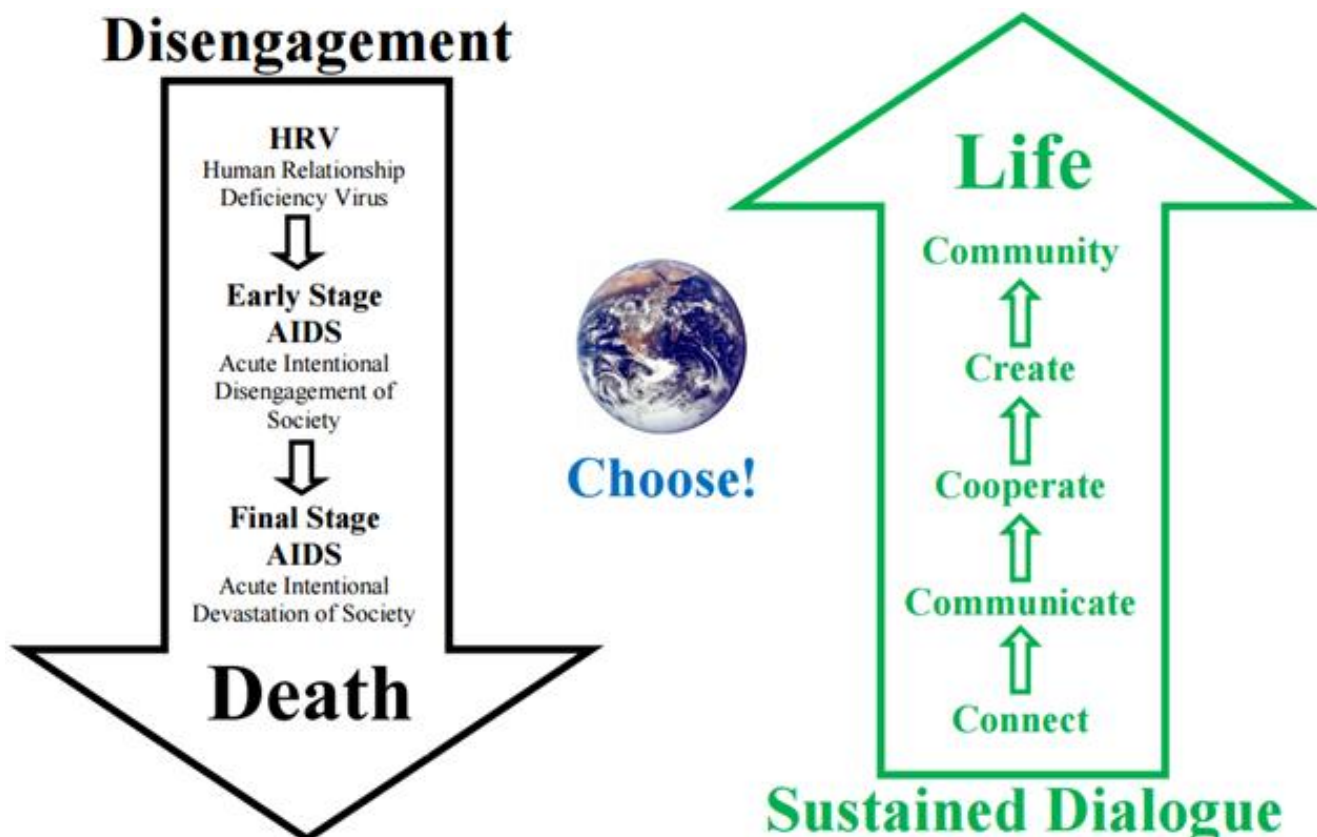
Gracia (HP): "I think that the problem of communication is the main cause of our silent conflict."

Blandine Lukau (HP): "We are all equally human, and we must love each other! I will suggest to NHP transcending the exaggerated feeling of inferiority and separation from HP."

VI. HUMAN RELATIONSHIP-DEFICIENCY VIRUS (HRV)

Describing our poverty of relationships was a moment of great attention and silence, with universal meaning for everyone in the room. To miss this would mean to miss the meaning of the meeting.

This clarifies the vision and mission of dialogue, and that all participants can be facilitators and counselors everywhere -- in families, schools, universities, streets, villages, buses, planes, boats.



VII. THE FACE-TO-FACE, KNEE-TO-KNEE, HEART-TO-HEART MOMENT

The practical, face-to-face experience of dialogue and its fruits now move beyond intellectual, theoretical discussions. Empathy, mutual appreciation, trust, and emotion come to life -- closing distances, dignifying everyone, creating community.



This atmosphere is contrasting and opposite to the isolation and humiliating environment of the NHP school described earlier and which inspired the creation of today's NHP-HP dialogue generously assisted by three sign-language interpreters.

It was uplifting to see the participants exchange addresses, phone numbers, and promises to call and visit each other!





VIII. ASSIMILATION OF THE FACE-TO-FACE DIALOGUE

Heard from non-hearing persons:

Rebeca Malu (NHP): "I'm full of joy from the invitation and for the good lesson you give us. I'm very, very happy. I thank daddy (Mr Ellesse) for the idea of gathering the NHP and the HP. The ideas and successful methods we experienced here were exceptional. I would like these kinds of meetings to be multiplied!"

Ms Bizeya (NHP): "Thank you very much for all you have explained! It touches my heart, and I appreciate a lot your interest in us. I felt a great friendship with HP! We invite you to continue in the same way and never stop. God bless you!"

Bergu Nku (NHP): "I give my thanks to the initiator that really has helped us communicate excellently with HP. It is wonderful."



Hearing persons said:

Md Charlene Bakambana (HP): "I love this practice of dialogue. We finally got together in enlightening dialog with NHP."

Md Lydie Kurie (HP): "I loved and enjoyed my first time to dialogue with NHP. We are really all one."

Dan Laby (HP): "What I find impressive is how this meeting has made me lucky enough to finally meet and have NHP friends."

IX. THE RESTAURANT COMMUNION MOMENT

Divided in the beginning, NHP sat down on the left side and HP on right. Now near the day's end, they sat mixed among each other to share a modest meal in community. Now they were all in the same group! No difference! No wall!

X. WORDS OF THE ZACHARIA GROUP PRESIDENT

Participating was Mr Joseph Zamba, president of the NHP Zacharias community, which takes its name from Luke 1:57-63 that suggests that John's father, Zacharias, was deaf and mute.



NHP Zamba thanked the facilitator for such an "agreeable surprise" that dignified the NHP. He invited everybody in the world to pay attention to NHP who need support and inclusion from governments and all HP citizens.

XI. WORDS ABOUT INTERPRETER PAULINE KABUKU

Pauline Kabuku, the main Zacharia community sign language interpreter, was a major reason for the meeting's success with her skills, big heart, and deep understanding of the human beings in the room. She and two other interpreters were models of communication excellence and selfless generosity.



Kabuku expressed her joy for the new ideas she just discovered, and said that this was a high quality of communication and a superb style of integration. She ended by wishing the continuation of this activity with other groups of NHP and HP.

XII. CLOSING WORDS OF FACILITATOR ELESSE BAFANDJO

We NHP and HP succeeded today like a miracle for us! It was our first face-to-face meeting and dialogue workshop between the hearing and the non-hearing communities, with the assistance of three sign language interpreters! We shall never forget this day when a dream became reality for us!

Let us thank Libby and Len Traubman for the deep message contained in the dialogue teachings for inclusiveness and the discover of the humanity within one another. Yes, today we saw walls broken and bridges constructed!



**Elesse and Virginia Bafandjo
Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)
MLADRC.EIvi@yahoo.fr**

**The larger story is at
<http://traubman.igc.org/vidnigeriadrcngo.htm>**