

## "Enemy" Rival Football Fans Humanize Each Other in Democratic Republic of Congo

June 2013



[Virginia and Ellesse Bafandjo](#) live in Commune de Lemba, Kinshasa, DR Congo. They dedicate their lives to helping local youth and adults receive adequate education, health care, social services, and communication skills to overcome violence in their culture.

In January 2012, they requested by e-mail and received by airmail their nation's first DVDs of the new, how-to documentary film, [DIALOGUE IN NIGERIA: Muslims & Christians Creating Their Future](#). They wrote:



*The film is a whole treasury...a mighty instrument to help the people of the nations emerge from danger. It's medicine for our "Human Relationship Deficiency Virus - HRV," to help our community, authorities, youth, families...for great changing. Spread it as far as possible!!*

February 2012 to March 2013 in Kinshasha, with courage and creativity they used practices in the film to bring together diverse youth and adults for successful, face-to-face communication and relationship healing. Preserved online are photos and stories of [Steps #1-6 in Kinshasha: Learning Principles of Engagement](#) then their inspiring April 2013 [Step #6: Albino~Non-Albino Face-to Face Reconciliation](#).



### Step #7:

Saturday, 15 June 2013 -- Kinshasa, DR Congo

### Film Screening & Face-to-Face Rival Football Fan Reconciliation

Human emotions of soccer football rivalries can erupt into war-like rage and violence between fans community-wide, across Africa, and worldwide.

In Kinshasa, DR Congo are such archrivals -- [Vita Club](#) and [DCMP -- Daring Club Motema Pembe](#).

Sometimes-bloody running battles pit "Imaniens" (DCMP supporters) against "Vitaclubiens" (Vita Club backers).

Fan clashes have caused deaths, great human injury, and massive property destruction inside stadiums and on the streets.

Post-game rampages and revenge cry out for a new way to dignify the sport and the Congolese sportsmen and sportswomen by reuniting and humanizing one another.



## A. Hostile Beginnings: Enter Vita Club and DCMP Supporters

**With creative purpose**, supporters were welcomed from [Vita Club](#) and [DCMP](#) -- the two famous Kinshasa teams.

To fully acknowledge each group, they were asked to sing and dance as they always do in the stadium. The results were predictable and dramatic.



**Vita Club supporters** sang and danced with hostility, as usual in the stadium.

The songs expressed hate, violent attacks, and the promise of a fight.

Amplified speakers sent the sounds outside the meeting place and into the streets.

The shouts and yells brought neighborhood crowds invading the room.

**DCMP backers** did the same as the Vita Club supporters, dancing, singing and provoking hostilely.



**Neighborhood sympathizers** heard their yells and entered the room with supportive chants and insults.

**The adversaries mirrored each other; neither was distinctive.**

The room was living the stadium atmosphere, with resounding noise from the aroused youth and adults.

It was so crowded that some people entered over the wall.

Finally, curiosity increased with the Kinshasans gathered against the walls to open the center of the room.

## B. Facilitator Elesse Juggles the Ball

Elesse Bafandjo stepped into the circle to skillfully juggle and do tricks with the ball.

The facilitator - and lifetime football fan and skilled player since childhood - created an atmosphere of relationship and demonstrated that he's not a foreigner to their world of football.

The crowd expressed their common interest and appreciation with acclamations and shouts, and began to give him more consent to lead them.



## C. Question to the Supporters, and Their Answers

The facilitator, Elesse, asked everyone: **"Is it true that Vita Club and DCMP supporters are enemies and live with hate that can lead to violence, destruction, and death?"**

Four persons responded, two from each group. Two were extreme, two more moderate:

**1. Dany MBALA (DCMP):** "It is really true that we are enemies with the supporters of Vita Club. It is impossible to be in one accord with them. In addition, I simply cannot love them."

**2. Jered MATABISI (Vita Club)** (refusing to name any individual): "I confirm that we are eternal enemies with them. I prefer a cafard (cockroach) to them. For your information, when their small team defeats another team, I generally don't eat all day long. I just can't love them."



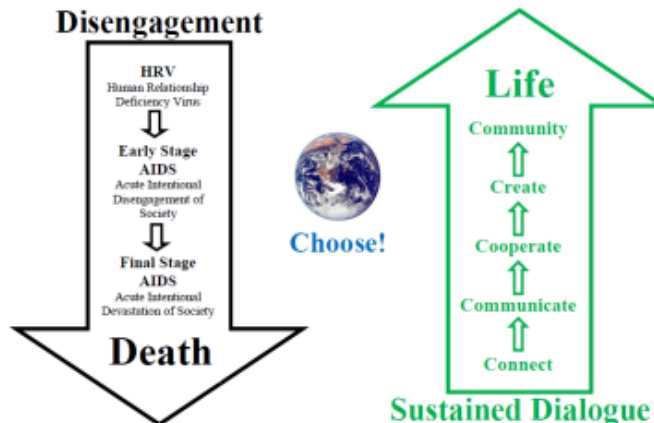
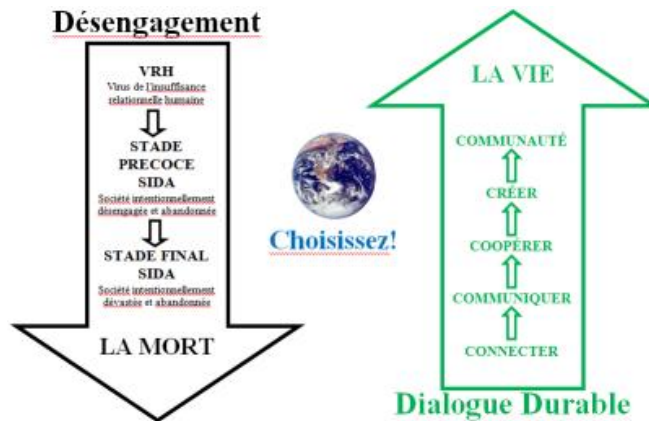


- 3. **Nathan LABY (DCMP):** "We are just rivals but not enemies, even if our hate is really great and dangerous."
- 4. **Horly MATA (Vita Club):** "We are not enemies, but I recognize a dangerous rapport with them."

### D. Pre-film Preparation and Presentation

With group interest growing, Elesse took the wireless microphone to communicate in French:

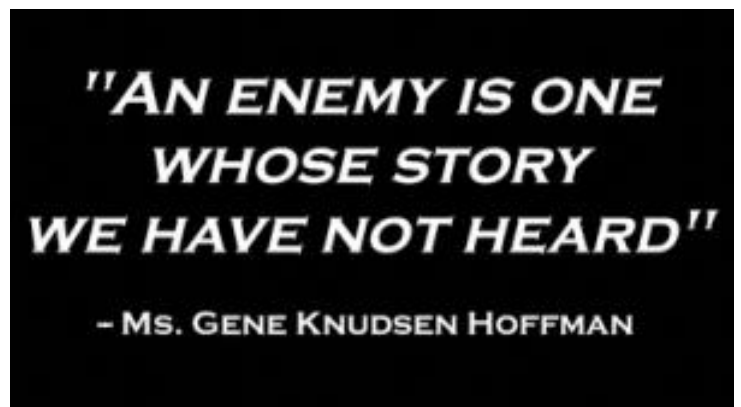
- **gratitude** for participants who travelled long distances to be in the room,
- the **high purposes** of the day's gathering.
- the **dangers** of more destruction and death from continued hate, violence, and remaining enemies.
- how indifference and remaining apart is the basis of many conflicts everywhere in the world.
- the history and the experience of his partner Jewish-Palestinian Living Room Dialogue in California, USA, with their mighty communication tools including cinema for face-to-face engagement and healing.
- the reality that no distance or technology can assure safety -- only **inclusiveness** with good relationships in our families, homes, and world.
- the life-saving insights of Nigerian citizen-leader and friend, Ande Ivorgba, who in 2010 defined **Human Relationship Deficiency Virus (HRV)** as the real killer in world today.
- the importance of becoming artisans of communication and peacebuilding together.



## E. Film Screening of *DIALOGUE IN NIGERIA: Muslims & Christian Creating Their Future*

With participants' minds opened and hearts softened, the room was full of great silence and calm. The 65-minute inspiring, instructional documentary was screened. Elesse Bafandjo interpreted all of it in both French and Lingala languages. While watching the film, participants were asked to consider two questions:

1. **What in the film touched you, had meaning for you?**
2. **What new possibility or initiative was awakened in you?**







### F. Face-to-Face, Knees-to-Knees, Heart-to-Heart: Listening to Our Stories, Becoming Closer

For 20 minutes, adult and youth participants moved together -- sitting face-to-face, knees-to-knees. As in the film, they listened to the life stories of each other. The spirit in the room changed, as enemies became closer and humanized each other. They began to be builders of peace.



## G. Participant Insights

**1. Papy MUYAYA (Vita Club):** *"The film is wonderful! It is, I think, a fruit of a great reflection and intelligence and will help for change. It communicates a so-important message. The death of people affects me deeply, and this has helped me today to re-model my attitude ..."*

**2. Ridi LUYINDULA (DCMP):** *"This film is good. I have not wasted my time to come and study it. I'm touched by the death of people and also by the decision of Christians and Muslims to refuse to be enemies for the happiness of all. We need much courage, understanding, and compassion...to decide for the way of peace, of life..."*

**3. Blanchard BUKA (Vita Club):** *"I'm touched to know and to see that the hate is not good. The indifference and being enemies is really a problem in our society. The main thing that awakens in me after following the film is that I have decided to do my best to create peace around me and everywhere I will be."*



**4. Dany BOKOLA (DCMP):** *"It is my first time to see this kind of film. I could not imagine! It extols the values of peace, reconciliation, and unity...I'm touched by the intelligence with which they created the diagram with all its contents in order to communicate such a living, instructive, and educational message for inclusiveness. I have simply decided to work, to live for life and not for death."*

**5. Jacqui ATENDA (Vita Club):** *"The film is an excellent initiative! A best tool of education. I'm touched by the indifference and non-acceptance between people...To hate is a danger. I'm especially affected by the notion of sustained dialogue and have decided to do my best to practice it."*

**6. Richa KALALA (DCMP):** *"The film is instructive and inspires me to do many things. It can help develop a peaceful relationship between persons of different belongings. I'm touched by the sustained dialogue that has interested me more than you can imagine! The film has awakened the desire for peace in me."*

## H. Refreshments to Celebrate and Conclude the Day

To close the successful day, the youth and adult participants shared cakes and drinks together.

They had discovered communication skills, their equal humanity, and that "story is the shortest distance between people."



Return to <http://traubman.igc.org/vidnigeriadrcngo.htm>  
to see all their  
**Relationship-Building Steps in Kinshasa, DR Congo**

