

Tubakunde exchange evaluation visit 2016

Music as Therapy International in Rwanda

Music as Therapy International's work in Rwanda was initiated by two UK music therapists, Helen Leith and Judith Nockolds, who both began visiting Rwanda in 2005 and saw the potential for *Music as Therapy International* to work in this context.

Music as Therapy International ran its first six-week skills-sharing project in Rwanda in 2010 in Cyangugu (now called Rusizi) in the south west of Rwanda. This initial project was led by UK music therapists Nicky Haire and Caroline Anderson. Nicky and Caroline returned for a follow-up visit in 2011 and again in 2013 for a support visit with Jane Robbie (*Music as Therapy International's* Support and Development Manager). In 2014, music therapist Stephanie Jayne and project assistant Hannah Hulin (*Music as Therapy International's* Projects' Operational Manager) ran another six-week skill-sharing project in Gisenyi, in the north west of Rwanda, and carried out a follow-up visit in 2015.

In July 2015 *Music as Therapy International* hosted a conference in Kigali, attended by around 70 professionals from all over the country, which celebrated the music as therapy work already achieved in Rwanda and marked the launch of the Tubakunde exchange project (which will be discussed in more detail below).

Rwanda

Rwanda, often described as 'the land of a thousand hills', is a small landlocked African country with Uganda to the north, Democratic Republic of Congo to the west, Burundi to the south and Tanzania to the east. The capital city is Kigali, which is located right in the middle of the country. The total population of Rwanda is currently around 8.5 million and around 44% of the population is described as living below the poverty line.¹ Rwanda is the most densely populated country in the whole of the African continent.

Up to around 1 million Rwandans were killed in the genocide of 1994. Very few families were left unaffected and many people are still living with the trauma and after effects of this devastating event. However, Rwanda has made remarkable progress economically and developmentally since the mid-1990s. The economy is presently mainly based on subsistence agriculture, but the Rwandan government have a vision to transform it into a knowledge-based economy for business and IT by 2020 (dubbed "Vision 2020").

There are a handful of organisations working with children and young people with disabilities in Rwanda. There are a number of day and residential centres around the country, but generally speaking these are oversubscribed and lacking in resources. The Rwandan government has just recently developed an inclusive curriculum and mainstream schools have begun opening their doors to students with disabilities over the last few years. In general, great strides have been made in terms of attitudes towards children and adults with disabilities in recent times.

Music is a vital part of traditional Rwandan culture, particularly group drumming, or *ingoma*. Dance, *ikinimba*, is another important art form. Traditional dance groups, *amatorero*, combining dance and music are found across the country.

Background to the Tubakunde exchange project

The Tubakunde network is a Rwandan organisation, the largest of its kind in the country, supporting care settings for children and adults with disabilities. In October 2015 six members of the Tubakunde network from various parts of the country travelled to Rusizi in the south west to take part in a one-day training programme. This was led by the two local *Music as Therapy International* partners from

¹ <http://www.unicef.org/rwanda/overview.html>

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this area of the country. The local partners talked about the basic principles of music as therapy and the attendees had the chance to observe music as therapy sessions in the two centres where the local partners are based.

This was a pilot project providing the opportunity for the local partners to share with other professionals the music as therapy knowledge and skills they have developed since taking part in the first six-week project in Rwanda in 2010. The hope was that the six attendees would each return to their individual settings equipped with the basic skills to begin running their own therapeutic music programmes.

Tubakunde evaluation visit 2016

In June-July 2016, music therapist Una McInerney and myself, Isabel Bedford, a trainee music therapist and community musician, travelled to Rwanda to evaluate the success of the Tubakunde exchange training programme delivered last October. We spent a total of two weeks travelling around Rwanda visiting each of the six different centres that had sent representatives to the training last October. We wanted to see if they had managed to successfully establish their own music as therapy programmes, to offer support, and to identify any key areas for further development.



Centre visits

Over the course of the two weeks, we visited the following six Tubakunde network centres who had all taken part in the training in October 2015:

1. Izere Mwana Sake centre - Ngoma, Eastern province
2. Humura day centre - outskirts of Kigali
3. Izere Mubyeyi centre – Kigali
4. HRD centre – Muhanga (Gitarama)
5. Komera centre - Komera (nr Kibuye)
6. Centre pour handicapés St Francois d'Assise - Rusizi (Cyangugu)

We initially stayed in Kigali for a period of three days and used this as a base for visiting three of the Tubakunde centres in or close to the capital. We then travelled to the west of the country and stayed at the centre in Komera for two evenings. Afterwards, we travelled south to Kamembe, in the Rusizi district in the south west, staying in the Munezero House run by the charity Rwanda Aid for six nights, before returning to Kigali for a further two nights.

We generally spent around half a day visiting each of the centres. As well as wanting to find out about the musical activity specifically, we also aimed to get a general impression of the centres. In each we met the centre director and took a tour of the premises, finding out about the educational and therapeutic programmes they offer, the number of children and young people they work with, the number of staff they employ and the resources available. The centres each have their own distinct feel

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and they vary greatly in terms of staff numbers and resources, generally reflecting their financial situation. Some are in receipt of financial support from the Rwandan government and international organisations, whereas others are working within more limited means.

We also met the music practitioner(s) in each of the centres and aimed to observe at least one music session. We observed some form of musical activity in each of the centres, although only in half of the centres could we say that "music as therapy" was taking place. The reason why two of the centres had not been able to establish music as therapy programmes was because the staff member who had attended the training last October had since left.



We were very impressed that some of the centres were already running very organised and effective music as therapy programmes having received such a small amount of training. In these centres where music as therapy was taking place, we talked with the music practitioner(s) running the sessions to see how they were finding the experience of delivering sessions. We were keen to find out what challenges the staff members were facing and what further support they would ideally like in order to be able to develop their music as therapy programmes.

An enthusiasm for music as therapy was present in all of the centres. Staff, and parents in some cases, spoke passionately about their belief in the power of music to help children and young people with disabilities. All three of the centres who are not currently running music as therapy sessions are still very keen to try and establish music as therapy programmes in their settings in future and would like the opportunity to receive more training.



Visits to local partners in Rusizi (Cyangugu)

In the second week of the project, we visited Ngwino Nawe and Urugwiro Nkanka, the two centres in Rusizi where the original skill-sharing project took place in 2010. These two centres are now described as 'centres of excellence' since they have very established and successful music as therapy programmes. We met with the two Local Partners who ran the training last year to find out how they found the experience of training other staff in music as therapy techniques and to see if they would be interested in delivering further training. We also wanted to see how their own music as therapy programmes are developing.

Conclusion

We were successful in making contact with all of the six Tubakunde centres who had taken part in the training as well as the local partners in Rusizi (Cyangugu). Through the visits we felt we were able to fulfill our main aim of evaluating the impact of the training run last October. At the end of the two weeks in Rwanda we completed a SWOT analysis and an evaluative report has since been produced and a number of recommendations made. The visit created not only the opportunity to evaluate the training programme and to think about potential further developments for this aspect of *Music as Therapy International's* work in Rwanda, but it also enabled us to get an overview of where music as therapy is at in Rwanda in general.

It is very exciting to see how *Music as Therapy International's* work in Rwanda will continue to move forward in the future. There is an appetite and strong enthusiasm for music as therapy and it certainly

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seems that there is a lot of potential for this type of work to continue to grow, both in terms of its reach and also in terms of the depth of skills of the music as therapy practitioners working in this context.

Thanks

Being part of this project has been an extremely rich experience. Both Una and I would like to thank all of the directors and staff at each of the centres we visited (Izere Mwana Sake, Humura, Izere Mubyeyi, HRD Muhanga, Komera, Centre pour handicapes St Francois d'Assise, Ngwino Nawe, Urugwiro Nkanka) for their incredibly warm welcome and for sharing their work with us. We are particularly grateful to the staff at Komera centre for accommodating us and looking after us so well over the two days we spent there.

We would also like to express our gratitude to Theopiste and all of the other staff at the Tubakunde network who helped us so much in terms of making arrangements for the trip. Sincere thanks also to all of the staff at Rwanda Aid, in particular Karen and Felicien, for their support in the lead up to and during our very comfortable stay at Munezero House in Kamembe.

We are very grateful to all of the sponsors of this project for making the trip possible - Eleanor Rathbone Charitable Trust, Abernethy Parish Church and the Fresh Leaf Foundation.

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Isabel Bedford, Project Assistant
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