

INTRODUCTION

Since 22 November 2010, the Statutes of the Association Foyer de Paix Grands-Lacs have been legalised by the Ministry of Justice in the Provincial Division of Bukavu (DRC). The preamble of these statutes underlines the context and ethical issues of our research and our commitment in this subject. Indeed, the Province of South Kivu in particular, and the Great Lakes Region in general, has not been spared from the socio-political crises triggered by the Rwandan genocide (1994). In addition, the consequences of the dictatorial regime of Marshal Mobutu (1965-1997), the massive and prolonged presence of Rwandan refugees on Congolese territory, the so-called wars of liberation, are all factors that have weakened the socio-economic framework of the Great Lakes Region. Each of these events has had dramatic consequences in the fields of public health, culture and education, politics, free way of life, etc.

Specifically, there were:

- Displacement of populations: first foreign refugees and then indigenous refugees within their own country, fleeing atrocities, rapes, killings committed by the Rwandan rebels (FDLR)¹ and armed militias which have multiplied over the last ten years.
- Massacre accentuating the number of widows and orphans, with their corollaries: poverty, insecurity, the recruitment of children into armed militias, rape and sexual violence, the spread of STIs and HIV, the plundering of mining resources, unemployment, human rights violations, the stigmatisation of "witch children" and inter-ethnic conflicts, etc.

This bitter observation motivated the creation of the Association Foyer de Paix Grands Lacs with a view to proposing concrete actions in the field: actions capable of giving vulnerable people other reasons for "a better coexistence" and hope for sustainable peace. They aim at the integral development of people (especially children, youth, and women), reconciliation, peaceful cohabitation, and peace building in the Great Lakes Region.

How can we propose an alternative to this "culture of death" marked by violence and hatred, in order to leave future generations a legacy worthy of us? How can we envisage the future in this region, long scarred by wars and which, paradoxically, is inhabited by peoples with a common destiny? Are not cross-border friendships, inter-ethnic marriages, inter-university and commercial exchanges, etc., as many socio-economic assets from which another "culture of life", another "democratic" policy, respectful of fundamental human rights, could emerge?

¹ Forces Démocratiques de Libération du Rwanda (FDLR), composed primarily of former military members of the Habiarimana regime, the former president of Rwanda.

1. OUR EXPERTISE: PEACE RESEARCH IN THE GREAT LAKES OF AFRICA²

See annexed Documents:

- The Partnership Agreement between the UNESCO Chair in Sexual Health and Human Rights and our Association Foyer de Paix Grands Lacs
- And other related documents.

2. NEED FOR INTEGRATION IN A MIXED RESEARCH UNIT:

Our expertise deals with the issues of social relations in a given cultural context, located in the Great Lakes Region of Africa. Soon we are going to accomplish ten years of investigation and engagement in this region, which is still undermined by atrocities and open wounds. We have had time to question several sectors of life, including peace and development in correlation with other social issues, human rights and integral ecology.

- Our expertise requires a "discussion" with other approaches in an interdisciplinary framework in order to enrich each other and contribute effectively to a quality joint and/or individual writing project.
- This same expertise could bring a complementary analysis to an Observatory of Human Rights and Conflict Management in this cultural area of the Great Lakes Region of Africa.

Example 1: Social inequalities in general, and gender inequalities in particular, are so scandalous when it comes to the stages of prevention and care against HIV and sexually transmitted infections among our vulnerable populations: women who are victims of physical, sexual and/or psychological violence, people with disabilities, people with mental health problems, former child soldiers, albinos, the elderly, pygmies, etc.

- How can these social inequalities be included in the political and programmatic objectives of the vision of universal access to screening and antiretroviral treatment without, at the same time, seeking to understand the political, social and family contexts that condition behaviour in terms of access to screening, care and maintenance of treatment? How can treatment be offered without protecting vulnerable people from the stigma they suffer?

Example 2: The children of raped women, victims of foreign (and indigenous) armed gangs, are rejected by all: unwanted (unexpected) by the mothers, excluded in the extended family circle, ignored by their real fathers and almost "cursed", considered as "outcasts" in their living environment. Add to this social drama the fact of being born to a mother already infected with HIV and/or other sexually transmitted infections.

- The process becomes even more complex when it becomes part of certain African traditions where (modern) medical treatments and self-medication, witchcraft, fetishism, and ancestral mysticism are combined in an esoteric atmosphere in daily life.

² Our PhD thesis at the Marc Bloch University in Strasbourg (14 October 2008) opened a huge construction site concretising the thoughts of my reference authors, including Marc Sangnier and Emmanuel Mounier. Title of my thesis: *Penser l'Afrique et son avenir avec Marc Sangnier et Emmanuel Mounier. La voie du personnalisme communautaire*. Thesis already published in two volumes: The first one under the title : *Repenser les relations Europe-Afrique avec Marc Sangnier et Emmanuel Mounier. Au-delà des polémiques coloniales*, Paris, Editions de l'Harmattan- Grands lacs, May 2012, 272 pages. While the second volume was already published under the title : *Marc Sangnier. Deux mois en Afrique et en Espagne. Notes et impressions*, Paris, Ed. Don Bosco, 2009, 180p.

- In the era of profound migratory changes, our expertise could promote, in this interdisciplinary research framework, a holistic analysis, upstream and downstream, on new themes of multiculturalism, technological globalization, governance of policies in the North and South with corollaries like conflict management, rape, repeated wars, arms trafficking, armed gangs, etc..

These are all themes that we would like to discuss within a mixed Research Unit with a view to an analysis and evaluation applied to the vulnerable populations that we have been supporting for almost ten years, bringing our sociological, ethical and political approach.

3. PUBLICATION PROJETS

1. *Voyager autrement avec Marc Sangnier. Lecture des manuscrits de Marc Sangnier*
Travelling differently with Marc Sangnier. Reading Marc Sangnier's manuscripts (1891)

We have already published the manuscripts of the travels of Marc Sangnier (1873-1950) in North Africa. We have just finished the transcription of his travels to London and Constantinople (1891). This 18-year-old young man already had a spiritual depth that is reflected in his travel diaries, in his encounters with other cultures. His intellectual and spiritual capacities are like early intuitions of an adventure of peace at the international level of the future founder of "Le Sillon". These were the signs that laid the foundations for the pacifist's action in the inter-war period.

It is an honor for us to have transcribed these "hidden treasures" at 38, Boulevard Raspail, in Paris. Making them accessible to other researchers would be for us the best tribute to pay to this "peacemaker" who believed until the end that "love is stronger than hate". We thank his granddaughter Annicette Sangnier for agreeing to preface these travel notes.

Deadline: until March 2021

2. *Droits humains et éthique du devenir-sujet en Afrique des Grands Lacs. Paroles aux ex-enfants soldats du Foyer de Paix.*

Human rights and ethics - becoming a subject in the Great Lakes of Africa. Words to the former child soldiers of the Foyer de Paix.

For the tenth anniversary of our Association Foyer de Paix Grands Lacs, we intend to offer a special platform to the former child soldiers of Bunyakiri whom we have welcomed in our professional learning center and whom we are accompanying for an integral social reintegration. An opportunity to develop the originality of our method, of our pedagogy for the resilience of those wounded in repeated wars in our Great Lakes Region. This pedagogy has the motto: ""Construire en se construisant"". It also applies to women who have been raped and to the children resulting from these atrocities who are mourning in the Great Lakes sub-region.

Deadline: until December 2020

3. *Dieu est-il devenu sourd ? « Laissez-nous vivre », huit ans après.
Has God gone deaf? "Let us live", eight years later.*

In July 2012, our Christian Group for Reflection and Action, Groupe Chrétien de Réflexion et d'Action (GGRA) published an analytical essay and proposals about violence in armed conflict. On behalf of the victims, especially women, we demanded the right to live. The title says it all: "let us live". In the foreword of this collective book, Father Bernard Ugeux judiciously describes the context from which this pathetic cry emerges:

"(...) as narratives inherited from antiquity tell us, women were usually part of the spoils of war to which the victors had full rights in the same way as they were part of the conquered territories and the fruits of their plunder. The twentieth century was not to be outdone in this aspect, as the attitude of successive victors during the two world wars proved. Violence against women is the same whether in the West or in the East. More recently, events in Kosovo and the genocide in Rwanda have shown that it is especially in the context of armed conflict that women and children are the first victims of violence. Since 1994, the countries of the Great Lakes of Central Africa have been the scene of violence that has surpassed anything seen before. In the Democratic Republic of Congo, for more than 15 years, women have not only been victims of rape "in the presence of their husbands and children", but also tortured. Moreover, children and men are not spared by these acts, which go beyond bestiality. Since the genocide in Rwanda in 1994 and the exfiltration of the presumed perpetrators to the Congo, violence, sexual or otherwise, has gone beyond anything imaginable. »

We want to reread this book in the light of current events. Eight years after our "Letter to God", the conclusion is bitter! Hence the title: "Has God become deaf? »

Deadline: until December 2020

We are counting on your networking with other teachers and researchers with a view to my integration into an interdisciplinary research unit and on your support for these publications planned in the short and medium term.

I thank you in advance for your kind consideration and the attention you will give to this project and for your frank collaboration in its realisation³.

Translation: Katharina Brecht, M.A.

Original text in French : Prof. Roger Rubuguzo Mpongo, *Projet de recherche : Droits humains et gestion des conflits en Afrique des grands lacs. Quel engagement éthique pour le développement et pour une paix durable ?*

³The AMANI KWENU Association (Switzerland), which supports our research-action in the field, is willing to translate the publications related to our common mission into German. Hence the deliberate choice to write some books in a language accessible to the general public. We do not have a choice because it will be a question of reporting on the results of certain experiences lived or initiated by the Foyer de Paix Grands Lacs, with the companionship of "peacemakers", in Switzerland and in France. We thank them for their loyalty and their constantly renewed trust.