

Healing of Memories training – Cotonou 2022

COLLECTIVE WOUNDS

QUESTIONS FOR JOINT REFLECTION (1 April – 30 June 2022)

- **within your own group**
- **with your partner groups**
- **beyond your usual circle of contacts**

There are no right or wrong answers!

It's only your answers and those of the people you meet that matter in this exercise.

The 7 points below are intended as a guide for your conversations. Feel free to expand on them as you wish.

ANSWERS RECEIVED FROM ALAIN SAMBOU (Senegal)

1. What are the ancient, old and recent wounds that affect our country, our region, our community?

Draw up a list of those wounds.

The tragedy of the sinking of the boat Le Joola, on September 26, 2002, which caused 1863 deaths, is one of the worst wounds my country has ever known.

The demonstrations (political violence) of March 26, 2021 caused the death of 14 young demonstrators, without any judicial sanction.

Recently, on May 26, 2022, we lost 11 babies in a fire at the public hospital in Tivaouane and this was preceded by the shocking death of Astou Sokhna, married and 9 months pregnant, who died in the hospital in Louga on April 1, 2022.

2. More specifically, what are the events or situations experienced by our nation, or by certain communities within our nation, that are at the root of these wounds? Describe these events and situations, and say in what way they have been painful, and for whom.

Senegal has known slavery but also the war in Casamance (Dud region of Senegal) which has decimated many children of the Nation, both on the side of the army and the rebellion. The country has experienced a deep fracture and the people of the South have felt excluded at times, but fortunately the rebellion is losing more and more ground and is weakening day by day. Many of its charismatic leaders are no longer alive, and talks are underway for a definitive end to this war, which was born in 1982 out of the desire for independence of some of the sons and daughters of Casamance.

3. What social or political attitudes in our country have been, or are still, the cause of wounds?

What groups are discriminated against, marginalized, humiliated?

The abuse of democracy and unauthorized political demonstrations have caused many deaths for over a decade. The Senegalese is also, somewhere, a careless person who does not want to respect a certain established order to such an extent that it has caused accidents at sea, on the road, in hospitals and other social damage. Unfortunately this is often glossed over.

4. In what ways are these wounds visible in people's lives in our country?
What are the collective wounds in my country that affect me (or us) personally? In what way?

Whenever there are social demands, it revives the ghost of the dead and previous pains. And it always affects me when people die, especially in the prime of life.

5. What are the areas of silence – the things that cannot be talked about – in our country or in certain communities within it? Why are people silent about these issues?

Senegalese people are still very religious. Two subjects remain very socially sensitive: abortion and homosexuality. Otherwise, all other subjects can be discussed without worry and anywhere in the country.

6. Who is "the other" in our context? Who is "us"? Who is "them"?

The other is the stranger in our midst. "Us" means the people who share our vision and values. "Them" means the ones in my community who don't share the same vision as me.

7. What could be done to heal some of the deep wounds that we have identified?
What is our dream for our country, our nation? How can we contribute to realizing this dream?

Public forums and debates that allow people to express themselves freely and, at the same time, bring out what they keep buried inside.

Involvement, commitment, civic-mindedness and a sense of responsibility are both individual and community levers for the development of a nation. We dream of a prosperous and welcoming nation for all.