



## PRESS RELEASE

### Learning to heal the wounds of the past

*From 15 to 25 July 2022, some thirty delegates from seven countries in francophone Africa will converge on Cotonou to be trained as healing of memories facilitators.*

The idea was born in August 2019, during Father Michael Lapsley's first visit to Benin. On this occasion, the founder of the Institute for Healing of Memories, based in South Africa, presented the French edition of his memoir "Redeeming the Past" – *Guérir du passé* – for the first time in the region.

Michael Lapsley, an Anglican priest originally from New Zealand, was the victim of a parcel bomb sent by the South African secret service in 1990 because of his involvement in the anti-apartheid movement. He lost both hands, one eye and part of his hearing in the attack. Following the fall of the apartheid regime, he founded the Institute for Healing of Memories to help South Africans overcome the legacy of racial segregation through listening-and-sharing workshops as a step towards healing. His methodology has now spread to some 20 countries.

His 2019 visit was a great success and his message touched many people very deeply in Benin and Togo, resonating with the experiences of the region's recent and ancient history. So much so that the question of a longer-term commitment in West Africa soon arose and the decision was taken, with the partners on the spot, to launch a two-year training cycle for healing of memories facilitators in francophone Africa.

Organised and run by the Institute for Healing of Memories (South Africa) and its European sister organisation Healing of Memories Luxembourg, under the direction of Father Michael Lapsley, the first session of this training programme will be held in Cotonou in July under the patronage of the South African Ambassador to Benin and Togo, the Archbishop of Cotonou and the Ombudsman of the Republic of Benin. 28 trainees from 7 francophone African countries (Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Mali, DRC, Senegal and Togo) will attend this 10-day course before engaging in practical work in their respective countries. The local coordination work will be the responsibility of ACAT-Benin (Action by Christians for the Abolition of Torture).

Cotonou, 24 June 2022

Attachment: Session leaflet

Videos : *The Father Michael Lapsley Story* (16'): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tef2AwclZsw>  
*Healing the wounds of the past* (7'): [www.youtube.com/watch?v=7la2\\_JVmMM4&t=16s](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7la2_JVmMM4&t=16s)  
*One Step Towards Healing* (17'): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3x6EcOmgGq0&t=24s>

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