

ACTIVITY REPORT



2021

HEALING OF MEMORIES LUXEMBOURG

<https://healing-memories.lu>

Every story needs a listener...



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Editorial

For our new association, as for so many people and groups throughout the world, 2021 was marked by many upheavals and uncertainties resulting from the continuing pandemic. Hoping that society would gradually re-open, we had planned a number of activities and events to promote healing of memories and to launch Healing of Memories Luxembourg. These events had to be postponed – twice! - by several months, which was disconcerting to say the least. How could we offer this service based on listening to and accompanying people when contacts, in-person meetings and travel were severely restricted? Along with all the suffering it entailed, the health crisis also taught us to be creative, not to remain stuck in our ways. It made us all the more attentive to the new wounds caused by the disease, by grief and by the feeling of isolation. This report describes the new online training and workshop formats that were developed here and in other countries to enable us to continue offering our services despite the physical constraints imposed by the crisis. It also mentions the strengthening of cooperation within our international network, prompted in particular by the problems caused by the crisis. As this report goes to print, the world is gradually getting back up to speed, resuming its old ways But Covid will not simply be associated with a gap in our activities. It enriched our work in a way no-one expected and, who knows, perhaps made each of us more aware of the wounds – often invisible – which surround us.

Patrick Byrne
Chairman

Functioning of the association



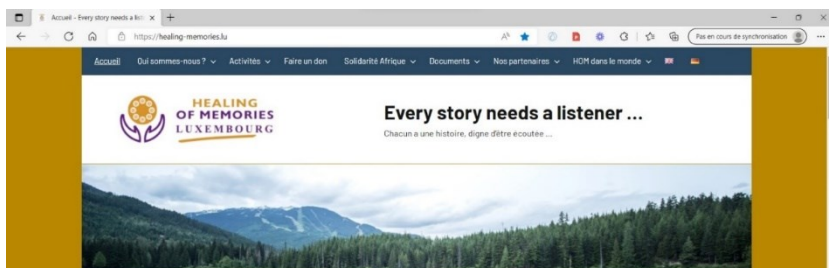
During 2021, the first full year for Healing of Memories Luxembourg, the Executive Committee (*left, end 2021*) continued putting in place the organisation and structures of our association.

We launched a membership campaign, targeted initially at people directly connected with healing of memories activities or with welcoming and hosting Michael Lapsley during his visits. As a result, in the course of the year the group of founder members were joined by others, bringing the total number of members to 38. The main aim was not to achieve a large membership but to have a solid base of active supporters. The committee also launched a first appeal for funds in order to consolidate our financial situation.

The first in-person Annual General Meeting was held on 26 June (*photo, right*), at last enabling some of our members to meet and to carry out a first assessment of our new association's activities as well as to recall the 12 preceding years of activity within the Healing of Memories Support Group of ACAT-Luxembourg.



Although several projects had to be postponed until 2022, our team used the time to finalise the preparations for these events, in particular Michael Lapsley's visit and the celebrations to mark the launch of the association, both planned for 2021 but twice delayed because of the pandemic. You will find a brief look at them at the end of this report, since 2022 is already well advanced at the time of publication.



The committee also put in place the association's communication tools. The team spent much of the year working hard to design and launch the trilingual website (<https://healing-memories.lu>), its structure and content. The aim was to provide all essential information in three

languages: French, English and German. (One-off articles will not all be systematically translated.) The site thus provides not only a means of communicating and reporting on our own activities, in particular the healing of memories workshops and how to register for them, but also a trilingual platform for exchanges within the international network, especially for the project in francophone Africa.

A Facebook page was also created (<https://www.facebook.com/guerison.des.memoires>), as well as a system of occasional newsletters so that information can be sent out periodically as and when needed.

Finally, the committee launched a project to make a video presenting the work of healing of memories in Luxembourg. The idea was to have our own multimedia tool and to present our specific characteristics, such as the diversity of our audiences, multilingualism, the commitment to helping refugees and to working in prisons, partnerships such as the one with francophone Africa and our European and international outreach.

Our Africa project: Training programme kicks off



Dakar – Workshop with the Senegal team

In 2019, Healing of Memories Luxembourg organised a tour with Michael Lapsley in West Africa, primarily for the launch of the French edition of his memoir (see 2020 Activity Report). Following this trip, given the interest shown by several of our partner groups in Africa (notably the ACATs in the region) and at their explicit request, Healing of Memories Luxembourg agreed to take up the challenge to provide a training programme for francophone Africa, together with the IHOM (South Africa). Since the IHOM's language of communication is English, it had been difficult for these partners in a non-English-speaking region to access information and activities relating to healing of memories, which were nevertheless considered so necessary for their populations. The aim of this project was to enable them to take ownership of the healing of memories methodology so as to establish and 'transpose' it into their own social and cultural context.

Thanks to the support of the Partage Luxembourg Foundation (through a five-year Framework Agreement with the Luxembourg Government) and the Grand Duke and Grand Duchess Foundation, work started on this project in 2021, its practical implementation being scheduled for 2022-26. The first two-year training cycle is planned for 28 participants from 7 countries – Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Mali, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Senegal and Togo.

An Africa Working Group has been set up to follow this project. Its members are: Patrick Byrne, Esméralda Chupin, Javier García Alves, Christian Kashemwa and Valdemar Santos.



Dakar – With the Senegal and Mali teams

The preliminary phase of this training programme began in October and November 2021 with several working sessions in West Africa. From 14 October to 3 November, Michael Lapsley, President of the Healing of Memories

Global Network, travelled to Abidjan and Dakar with his colleague from the Cape, Philani Dlamini, and two HOM Luxembourg members, Patrick Byrne et Javier García Alves, to hold discussions with the candidates from Côte d'Ivoire, Senegal, Burkina Faso and Mali, and to give them some pre-training, including an introduction to the healing of memories workshop. They observed the seriousness and commitment with which these candidates were preparing for the 2022 training.



Abidjan – With the Côte d'Ivoire and Burkina Faso teams

On 25 November, Patrick and Javier again travelled to the region, this time for 15 days in Togo and Benin to meet the candidates from these countries. They also met and worked with the team from ACAT Benin, who were responsible for the on-site organisation of the major 2022 session in Cotonou, in order to finalise the meeting logistics. In Togo, 6 participants followed a one-day pre-training in Lomé to introduce them to the healing of memories methodology.

A week later in Benin, 12 participants from Cotonou, Porto Novo and Parakou did the same. In addition to preparing the candidates for the July training, these encounters consolidated the spirit of teamwork among these people who would be responsible for introducing the healing of memories project to their countries.



Cotonou – Workshop with the Benin team



Together with the local welcoming team, they also visited the places earmarked for the training programme (accommodation, working sessions, excursions to historic sites, notably those linked to slavery).

Patrick and Javier also had the opportunity to hold discussions with three high-profile people who had agreed to join the Committee of Patrons of the Cotonou session and to address the participants during the session: the Ambassador of South Africa to Benin and Togo, the Archbishop of Cotonou and the Ombudsman of the Republic of Benin. On 1 December, they joined in a Remembrance Walk organised by the ambassador in Ouidah, on the Slave Route, to mark the anniversary of the abolition of slavery in South Africa.

Cotonou – Remembrance Walk with the Ambassador of South Africa to Benin and Togo

By the end of 2021 the groups from the 7 African countries involved in the programme had all had at least one experience of healing of memories and were due to enter a phase of reflection on the collective wounds of their countries in preparation for the July 2022.

Cotonou – presentation to the Benin team of their certificates of attendance at the pre-training session



Online workshop



On 3 and 4 July 2021, our association organised the first online bilingual (French-English) healing of memories mini-workshop, which brought together participants and facilitators in Luxembourg, South Africa, Switzerland, Togo and Spain.

This workshop followed the model already used in South Africa, the United States and Canada as a response to the constraints imposed by the Covid-19 pandemic. The format proved to be very promising. Despite the distance, the screen interface and the condensed format – one 2-hour and one 5-hour session - the participants were able to experience

the healing of memories methodology with the same depth and sense of togetherness as in a traditional workshop.

While the full residential 48-hour workshop is still preferable and will continue to form the basis of our programme, this experience opened up new possibilities, especially to enable people who are geographically or physically isolated to benefit from the healing of memories methodology.

Testimony from a participant

Comparing the different types of workshop: personal reflections

I have participated in healing of memories workshops organised by Healing of Memories Luxembourg for a number of years now - residential and non-residential workshops, mini-workshops, Phase-1 and Phase-2 workshops, follow-up reunions.

The pandemic affected everyone in terms of human contact and I was therefore pleased that there was at least a mini-workshop in 2021, even though it was online.

My previous experience of workshops helped me to prepare for this virtual encounter because I was able to reflect in advance on what was preoccupying me most at that time and how to explain it in a drawing.

At the same time, I was sceptical: normally, the 'effect' of a workshop derives both from our personal reflections and from others' reactions to our life story, and of course the interaction outside the working sessions is just as important.

How would it be to see and hear each other via a technical tool which I naturally use but which I am not a total fan of and given that I always prefer a direct conversation to emails, texts and other such messages?

At the beginning my misgivings seemed to be confirmed: some participants had technical issues, at times the video or the microphone didn't work optimally ... And of course I missed the personal contact with the others, including outside the actual sessions. Instead I had to go back home, back to my daily life.

However, to my great surprise, the 'effect', which is inexplicable to people who have never experienced it, worked and I managed to go deep into my thoughts and, especially, my feelings!

To sum up, although I of course prefer residential workshops (like the one in May 2022), where you take the time to focus fully on yourself and you have enriching encounters with others, this online mini-workshop was nevertheless more than just a make-do solution! And I preferred it to the non-residential workshop, where I had to manage the constant shift between the world of the workshop and ordinary daily life at home.

Andrée Biltgen

Facilitator training

In 2021, as in 2020, our team of facilitators followed online training sessions with Michael Lapsley, corresponding to three levels of experience.

At the beginning of the year, the facilitator team comprised 26 people, of whom 7 were certified by the IHOM at the end of 2020 : Patrick Byrne, Javier García Alves, Esméralda Chupin, Marie-Christine Ries, Valdemar Santos, Véronique Grimée and Romain Kremer. Of these, 5 are continuing their training as lead facilitators, to enable them to lead future workshops. The aim is to become increasingly independent in the running of our workshops, although we will always welcome Michael Lapsley's participation.

The other 19 facilitators are continuing their training in two separate groups. Three of them withdrew in the course of the year, for various reasons. Our online sessions allow some facilitators who do not live in Luxembourg (France, Quebec, Togo) to take part.

As part of the ongoing training of our facilitators we also organised online meetings for all our groups with Fatima Swartz, Director of Programmes at the IHOM in the Cape (South Africa), and Gloria Hage, Executive Director of IHOM-North America in New York (USA). These meetings enabled us to enrich our practices through hearing about other experiences, to discover other approaches and organisations within the network and to broaden our outlook.

High Patronage of HRH Grand Duchess Maria Teresa

As announced in the previous report, HRH Grand Duchess Maria Teresa granted us her High Patronage in 2021. Her Royal Highness has been connected with Michael Lapsley and, through him, with the healing of memories, for many years and has been a patron of the *Institute for Healing of Memories* in South Africa since 2010.

At the same time, the *Grand Duke Henri and Grand Duchess Maria Teresa Foundation* provides financial support for the facilitator training project in francophone Africa.

The Grand Duchess's moral and practical support for our association, which is in line with her well-known humanitarian commitment to victims of violence, both encourages us and highlights our activities. We are sincerely grateful to her.



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Participation in the global network

Our association, represented by Patrick Byrne, took part in all the meetings of the Healing of Memories Global Network, which were held online every six weeks. The network, which is still in the course of being set up, comprises groups in nine countries: South Africa, Canada, United States of America, Lesotho, Luxembourg, Myanmar, Namibia, Sri Lanka and Zimbabwe. Its goal is to facilitate regular discussions between the groups and thus to provide mutual help, to learn from their lived experiences in very diverse contexts, and to ensure that the methodology is applied consistently throughout the world. It publishes an annual activity report, rich in content, to which each group contributes a chapter. Its activities include the current launching of an online introduction to healing of memories comprising three interactive sessions, two primarily informative and the third offering the opportunity to experience a healing of memories mini-workshop. This introduction is being offered in English for now but the aim is to develop it in other languages.

Outlook for 2022

Several projects scheduled for, and largely prepared in, 2021 had to be postponed until 2022, in particular Michael Lapsley's visit and the celebration of the launch of our association. These events will be recounted in the next report but below is a first glimpse in pictures.



1 May^r 2022 – Celebration of the launch of Healing of Memories-Luxembourg



14 May 2022 – Day of reflection for facilitators



2 May 2022 – Meeting with Michael Lapsley and Luxembourg high-school students

April 2022, Marseilles: Michael Lapsley meeting with Jesuits



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Composition of the Executive Committee: Patrick Byrne, chairman; Esméralda Chupin, treasurer; Cécile Thill, secretary; Angela Borges; Paul Chahine; Javier García Alves; Marie-Christine Ries; Valdemar Santos