

ACTIVITY REPORT



2024

HEALING OF MEMORIES LUXEMBOURG

<https://healing-memories.lu>

Every story needs a listener...

Chacun a une histoire, digne d'être écoutée...



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Editorial

FINDING THE WORDS TO SAY IT... OR TO FEEL IT

Last year, our association acquired its own simultaneous interpretation equipment—a lightweight kit that can even be taken on a plane, thanks to special lithium-free batteries. A luxury, perhaps?

The work of healing of memories teaches us that when we suffer from our past, expressing in words the feelings arising from life's trials and tribulations allows us to touch our pain and begin to cleanse the wounds created by painful memories. In our workshops, one of the facilitator's key roles is precisely to help each participant find the words that best reflect these feelings.

To do this, everyone must be able to express themselves, whenever possible, in the language of their heart. In Luxembourg, where so many nationalities coexist, we are especially aware of the importance of translation. We have often organised multilingual workshops, thanks to our dedicated interpreters, but there is still much work to be done in this area.

In the same spirit, we decided in 2024 to support a project decided on by our partners in Goma (DRC), who are especially in our thoughts at this time: to make the healing of memories message available to people in that region in the language of their heart, which is also spoken across much of the African continent, by translating and publishing Michael Lapsley's book in Swahili.

We hope you enjoy reading our activity report!

Patrick Byrne, Chairman

LIFE OF THE ASSOCIATION

Over the course of 2024...

Throughout 2024, our association continued to develop its mission: training facilitators and organising workshops, hosting public events, and putting in place communication tools and strategies to increase our visibility and expand our activities. Our Executive Committee met ten times during the year, alongside several specialised working groups.

We are especially grateful for the work of our staff member, Valinda Batoto, who served as administrative coordinator in Luxembourg for the Africa project from September 2023 to August 2024. Her contributions included being part of the logistics team for the two training sessions in Grand-Popo, Benin, in July (see page 6). Valinda completed two six-month contracts, but due to insufficient donations and uncertain financial prospects, we were unable to offer a permanent contract from September. However, the role has since been renewed: Valinda returned to work with HOM Luxembourg on 1 November and we hope to secure the funding necessary to make this position permanent.

8 June - Annual General Meeting and public event

Once again this year, we took the opportunity offered by our AGM to invite a wider audience to an event on the subject of healing of memories.



After the official proceedings—reserved for our members and including elections for the renewal of the Executive Committee—we presented to an attentive audience a screening of *The Wound is Where the Light Enters*. This moving documentary follows a project with young people born out of the violent conflicts that tore apart northern Uganda, with the aim of helping them find a path towards healing using theatre and artistic expression. We were extremely fortunate to be able to follow the screening with a rich discussion via videoconference with the film's director, Dheeraj Akolkar, and a member of Grace International, the UK-based organisation that supports and develops such projects.





This event brought together our loyal members as well as newcomers interested in our work. Special thanks go to our interpreter for the day, Georgia Darke, who inaugurated our new simultaneous interpretation equipment and skillfully overcame the technical challenges of videoconferencing.

02-25 October - Visit of Michael Lapsley:

- 6 October – Public launch of the Kiswahili edition of Michael Lapsley's memoir (see page 7)
- 8-10 October – Short stay in Antwerp, Belgium, at the invitation of the association Without Walls, including a visit to a local prison and a talk, *From Death to Life*, for the World Day Against the Death Penalty
- 11-13 October – Workshop open to all in Clairefontaine (see page 8)
- 19 October – Facilitator training day in Luxembourg (see page 8)
- 21-23 October – Workshop for inmates at Schrassig Prison (see page 8)

- Other meetings during the visit included:

- attending the ArcelorMittal Foundation awards ceremony (we were selected for a donation)
- a conversation with students at Aline Mayrisch High School, Luxembourg City (*photo opposite*)
- a meeting with Véronique Dockendorf, Director of Political Affairs at the Foreign Ministry
- a meeting with Auxiliary Bishop Leo Wagener and Vicar-General Patrick Muller
- a meeting with Reverend Read and Reverend Heal of the Anglican Church.



We were deeply saddened by the death on 30 October of Romain Kremer, one of our founding members and facilitators. Motivated by deep compassion for those with a painful past, and committed to walking alongside them, Romain was part of the very first team to welcome the healing of memories project to Luxembourg in 2008, during Michael Lapsley's first visit. A founding member of our association in 2020 and an active facilitator, Romain was particularly dedicated to offering 'a step toward healing' to prisoners and refugees. We will keep him in our hearts with affection and gratitude.

Communication

Following last year's launch of our website and short film, this year we added a bilingual flyer to our communication tools—easy to distribute and available for any outreach activities (*cover of the English version below*). Copies can be requested from the secretariat: (healing@healing-memories.lu).

To develop a strategy for reaching a wider audience—both to raise awareness of our work and to ensure a sufficient number of participants for each workshop—the Executive Committee decided to form a dedicated working group for this purpose. In addition to their regular meetings, members took part in an in-depth strategic session led by Théo Péporté, former Communications Director of the Archdiocese of Luxembourg, focusing on evaluating our current communication tools and aligning them with our objectives.

FORMATION DE FACILITATEURS DE GUÉRISON DES MÉMOIRES POUR L'AFRIQUE FRANCOPHONE



Two years after launching the healing of memories training project for francophone Africa, HOM Luxembourg initiated a new training cycle in July 2024, in collaboration with the Institute for Healing of Memories (South Africa), and with the support of the Luxembourg Government, the Grand Duke and Grand Duchess Foundation, and several other generous donors.

Opening ceremony (12/07/24)

From 12 to 22 July, 26 new trainees from nine West and Central African countries—Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Mali, Niger, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda, Senegal, and Togo—took part in a 10-day basic training session in Grand-Popo, Benin, to prepare them to become facilitators of healing of memories workshops in their respective countries.

This was followed by an advanced training session from 24 to 29 July for 14 trainees from the seven countries involved in the first cohort, to prepare them to become lead facilitators in their national teams.



Session on wounds (basic training)



Facilitation and logistics team

For this second edition of the full basic training, the team of trainers was both expanded and diversified to include three colleagues from South Africa: Michael Lapsley (President of the Healing of Memories Global Network), Fatima Swartz (Director of the Institute for Healing of Memories), and Loret Mougani; three from Luxembourg: Patrick Byrne, Esméralda Chupin, and Javier García Alves; one colleague from Québec: Estelle Drouvin (Director of the Centre for Services in Restorative Justice); and one from Switzerland, originally from Malawi: Fulata Moyo (former consultant for the World Council of Churches on violence against women and children).

On the logistical side, Valinda Batoto, administrative coordinator of the Africa project for HOM Luxembourg, joined the on-site team, working in close partnership with the lead general coordinator in Benin and two representatives from ACAT-Benin, the host organisation.

Over the course of 10 days, the 26 new trainees engaged with deep commitment—and in a spirit of fraternity and joy—in both theoretical and practical training sessions. The goal was to build new teams in Niger and Rwanda and strengthen existing ones in the other countries. As in the inaugural 2022 session, the programme included:

- personal testimonies and sharing of stories about the collective historical and recent wounds experienced in each country;
- first-hand experience of a ‘standard’ healing of memories workshop and a second-phase workshop;
- an introduction to the history and philosophy behind the healing of memories approach;
- learning the facilitator’s role through practical exercises (role-play);
- an excursion to the historic site of Ouidah to walk and meditate on the Slave Route—a profoundly moving experience for many participants;
- definition of a roadmap for each national group, including a timetable of the practical activities to be organised in each country in 2025, with support from the first cohort of trainees.

A new and highly successful feature of this cycle was the introduction of thematic working groups. Each group reflected on a specific topic related to healing of memories, guided by a specialist witness (prisoners and HOM; sexual violence and HOM; interfaith work and HOM; marginalised groups, restorative justice and HOM; community dialogues and HOM).

The 14 trainees invited to the advanced five-day training had the opportunity to deepen their knowledge and prepare for the role of lead facilitator—responsible for guiding the flow of a workshop and coordinating the team of co-facilitators. At the heart of this session, the trainees simulated a workshop, where they practised leading and gained a clearer understanding of the structure and interconnected elements of this methodology. The programme also included discussions and exercises on conflict management, leadership and power, workshop logistics (time management, plenary facilitation, handling unexpected situations, etc.). The session fostered rich exchanges and a shared joy in building a community seeking to promote justice, peace, and healing in countries often marked by conflict and various forms of violence.



First edition of Michael Lapsley's memoir in an African language:

A partnership between HOM Luxembourg and the MLK Group in Goma (DRC)

In May 2023, the project to publish Michael Lapsley's book *Redeeming the Past* in Swahili, or 'Kiswahili', as it is called in that language, was launched in Gisenyi, on the northern shore of Lake Kivu, on the border between Rwanda and the DRC. Christophe Mutaka, from the Goma Martin Luther King Group, which is part of the healing of memories network, was in conversation with Patrick Byrne and Javier García Alves from HOM Luxembourg. Together, they reflected on the value of this autobiography as a tool for spreading the message of healing of memories and hence the importance of translating it into other languages. Our Luxembourg association had already contributed to the publication of several language editions of *Redeeming the Past* since its first appearance in 2012. Thanks to a donation to HOM Luxembourg some time ago, earmarked for the translation of this book, we were able to hire a Goma-based company to produce the Swahili edition.

The release of this edition, in late summer 2024, was marked by three official launch events: in Goma on 21 September, in Luxembourg on 6 October, and in Johannesburg on 29 November.

For the Luxembourg launch, we were fortunate to host the author himself. Michael Lapsley reflected on his personal journey and the origins of the healing of memories methodology. The audience was treated to the musical sound of the Swahili language through a reading from the book. Members of the Congolese and Ugandan communities in Luxembourg highlighted the significance of this translation for them: the possibility to read Michael Lapsley's testimony in their own language and to share his experience and message with communities who may not be able to access it in French or English.



Copies of the book can be ordered in Swahili, English, French, and Arabic from the association:

healing@healing-memories.lu

WORKSHOPS

• Once again, from **21 to 23 October** and in the presence of Michael Lapsley, a healing of memories workshop was held at the Luxembourg Penitentiary Centre in Schrassig, in which ten or so inmates took part. While the number of participants was limited, the depth of the exchanges and the intensity of the two days spent together made the experience all the more impactful. The joy and gratitude expressed by both the participants and the facilitator team once again affirmed the importance of holding our healing of memories workshops in this challenging environment, which is often drained of hope, respect, and kindness.



- From **11 to 13 October**, a first-phase workshop open to all took place in Clairefontaine (BE). Led by Michael Lapsley, it brought together 14 participants, as always from a wide variety of backgrounds, along with nine facilitators, co-facilitators, and interpreters.
(see cover photo)

FORMATION DES FACILITATEURS

At the beginning of 2024, we had 19 facilitators across all levels. This local team was joined by three co-facilitators in Canada, who participated via videoconference in the training sessions led by Michael Lapsley for the 'newcomers'.

During the year our facilitators continued their training programme:

- On 9 March a day of reflection and training was held, divided into two parts:
 - in the first part, facilitators benefited from supervision with Isabelle Faber and Sandra Balsamo, two psychologists from the Omega 90 association. Both agreed in 2023 to support our facilitators emotionally and help develop their reflection on their facilitator role while also strengthening team cohesion;
 - in the second part they reviewed the running of a healing of memories workshop, with practical exercises and role-play sessions.
 This day was fruitful and highly appreciated by the entire group.
- On 4 May our team gathered again for a training session for facilitators of all levels. They had the opportunity to practise the different roles of a facilitator through exercises and role-play activities.
- On 19 October we took advantage of Michael Lapsley's presence in Luxembourg to bring all facilitators together for a day of reflection and training, which proved enriching for everyone. Together, they discussed the challenges they may face as facilitators during healing of memories workshops and explored strategies to address these challenges.

PARTICIPATION IN THE GLOBAL NETWORK AND RELATIONS WITH OTHER GROUPS

Healing of Memories Global Network

Healing of Memories Luxembourg continued its collaboration within the global network by participating in regular online meetings of delegates from the nine member countries—South Africa, Canada (two autonomous groups in Edmonton and Montreal), the United States, Lesotho, Luxembourg, Myanmar, Namibia, Sri Lanka, and Zimbabwe - primarily to exchange information on their respective activities and to develop a number of joint projects.

Highlights of the 2024 initiatives include:

- the publication of a new 2023–2024 Global Report (in English), to which each national healing of memories group contributed a chapter. HOM Luxembourg was also responsible for the chapter on the training programme in francophone Africa. The global report is available on <https://healing-memories.lu>, under the section *Documents > Annual Reports*, or directly via this link: [Download the 2023–2024 Global Report \(PDF\)](#)
- continued efforts gradually to harmonise the training of healing of memories facilitators on all continents, including the standards to be complied with;
- the drafting of a text on the global network’s vision and mission, and a definition of its future structure;
- *ad hoc* bilateral collaborations, including the development of a joint training programme for lead facilitators to be implemented in 2025 with the Montreal group, under the supervision of the Institute for Healing of Memories in South Africa.

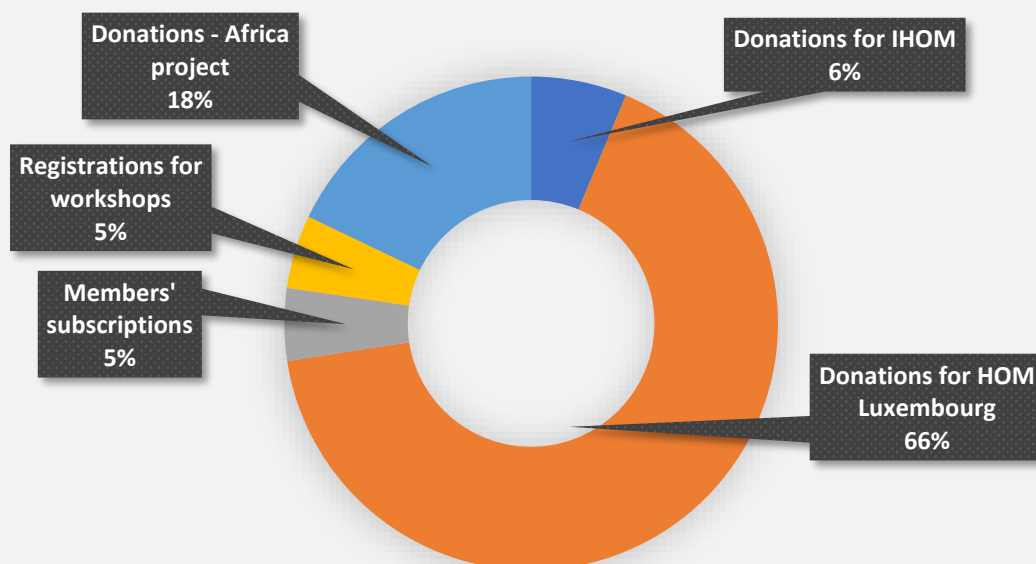
Hamburg group

From 12 to 14 February the Hamburg group organised its first healing of memories workshop at the *Missionsakademie* in Hamburg. The workshop was prepared in collaboration with Michael Lapsley, Patrick Byrne, and Marie-Christine Ries. Marie-Christine joined the group to co-facilitate this inaugural workshop, which brought together six participants. The facilitator team conducted an evaluation of the workshop and offered a follow-up meeting to participants.

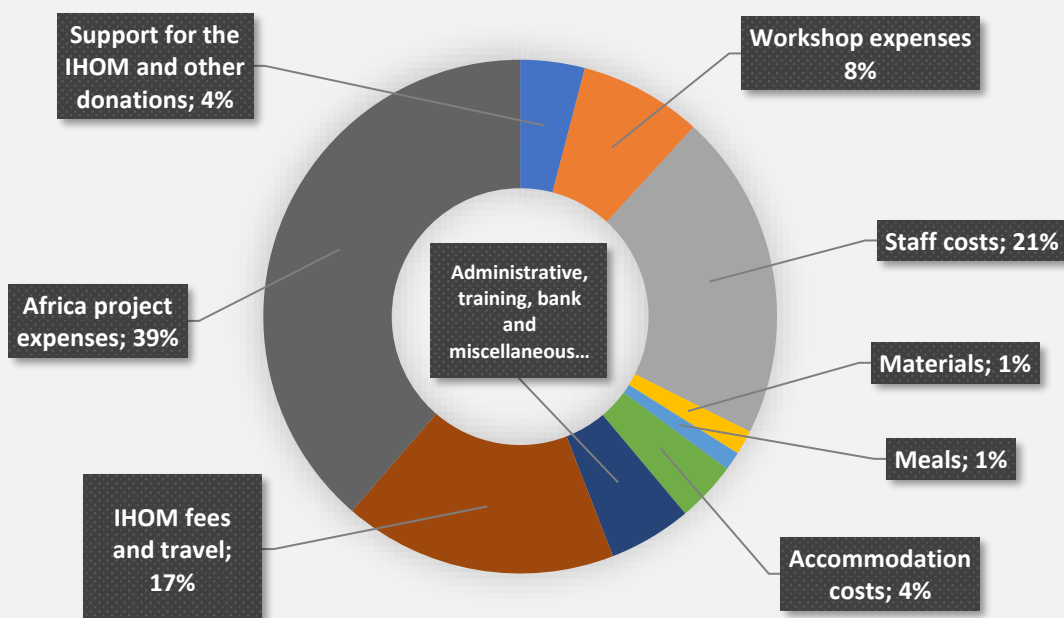
This cooperation is set to continue in 2025 and if possible to include the group currently being formed in the Osnabrück region, one of whose members took part in the healing of memories workshop in Clairefontaine last October.

FINANCIAL REPORT 2024

BREAKDOWN OF REVENUE



BREAKDOWN OF EXPENDITURE



Detail of revenue:

The principal sources of revenue include regular monthly donations, most of which are transferred to the HOM Institute in South Africa, and one-off donations.

As in previous years, donations comprised 90% of revenue.

Detail of expenditure

The main items of expenditure were:

- **support for the HOM Institute in South Africa**, which includes the donations received and the fees for the work done by Michael Lapsley during the Clairefontaine and prison workshops and the facilitator training sessions, as well as other costs (travel costs for Michael Lapsley and his assistant, accommodation and meals);
- **costs relating to the workshop open to all**
payment of the costs arising from the Medernach workshop in November 2023 (late processing);
- **staff costs**
salary and social security contributions for the staff member responsible for the administrative coordination and follow-up of the francophone Africa project, which comprises training in healing of memories and the establishment of this activity in the countries of francophone Africa;
- **expenditure on the Africa project:**
 - translation and publication of Michael Lapsley's memoir, *Redeeming the Past*, in Swahili, which was financed by a donation received in 2018 for the translation of the book;
 - payment to Fondation Partage Luxembourg: an advance of EUR 15,000 on amounts owed for the francophone Africa training project in 2024-25

Conclusion: This report sets out the financial situation of HOM Luxembourg in 2024.

OUTLOOK FOR 2025

For 2025 Healing of Memories Luxembourg has again set itself an ambitious programme:

- participation for the first time in the Festival of Migration, Cultures and Citizenship (15-16 March 2025) with a stand providing information and the possibility of meeting HOM Luxembourg members;
- organisation for the first time of two one-day mini-workshops, in June and November, designed to provide an introduction to the healing of memories methodology;
- organisation of a workshop open to all in October;
- gradual assumption of independent responsibility for the training of facilitators in Luxembourg;
- further regular support sessions for our facilitator team with two psychologists from the Omega 90 association;
- continuation of the facilitator training project in francophone Africa, with three visits to assist with workshops in Africa. Three members of HOM Luxembourg will participate as facilitators: in Burundi and Rwanda in May (depending on the security situation in the region); in Benin and Togo in July; and in Senegal and Côte d'Ivoire in December.

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Membership 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.

And since 8 June 2024: Laurent Lepany.

Photos: private individuals