



Resilience in Rwanda

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In 2015 I had the privilege of landing my dream job in my dream country. Despite having spent the greater part of the last twenty years in Kenya on the East Coast of Africa, Rwanda had always been a dream. I was appointed as Director of Learning Support for a school of around two thousand mostly Rwandan students. Before my departure from Qatar, I was called to ask if I would change that position to Acting Primary School Principal.

Rwanda is a country that was devastated by genocide in 1994. More than a million people were brutally slaughtered in just 100 days. The growth, development and vision of its president and its people show that in life nothing is too great to overcome.

The current president of Rwanda Mr Paul Kagame is the person who led the country out of civil war and genocide in 1994. Having himself fled the first genocide in 1954, Mr Kagame has built a country based on a greater level of resilience than my Western trained mind would ever have dreamed possible.

Rwanda has been built into a country of smooth roads, security and optimism through the work Paul Kagame has placed on resilience and connection. As part of our school curriculum we had two subjects of traditional Rwandan dance and traditional drumming that were taught as compulsory curriculum from Nursery through the Year 12. The Rwandan government has used these two cultural elements to build resilience and teach people not to focus on the past, but to look to the future.

Through these curriculum areas the school successfully developed a school wide approach to wellbeing. The program built relationships with peers, teachers and families and connected students to their culture and identity.

While I do not have specific data to support the work that we did in Rwanda, there are many stories such as these that I have from my teaching career that I feel can be lessons for resilience and wellbeing for Australian children and adults. Sometimes when we step outside of our world and what we think is a universal reality to see the reality of others, we in fact learn much more about ourselves.