

Akariza Laurette Annely

REBOUNCE

TRANS GENERATIONAL RESILIENCE IN RWANDA

RESILIENCE FROM ASHES



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Foreword

It is with great pleasure and admiration that I write this foreword for Akariza Laurette Annely's remarkable book, "Rebounce." In these pages, Akariza takes us on a poignant and inspiring journey through the concept of transgenerational resilience, drawing upon individual experiences of survivors and Rwanda's profound story of reconstruction and healing of nation after the Genocide against the Tutsi in 1994.

"Rebounce" is not just a book; it is a testament to the indomitable human spirit and the power of resilience in the face of unimaginable adversity. Through her words, Akariza invites us to delve into the depths of Rwanda's history, where the resilience of survivors has been a beacon of hope and a testament to the strength of the human soul.

As we navigate through the pages of "Rebounce," we are confronted to the harsh realities of Rwanda's past, where prejudice, discrimination, and hatred led to unspeakable atrocities. However, amidst the darkness, Akariza shines a light on the resilience of the Rwandan people, who, through their unwavering courage and determination, have emerged stronger and more united.

"Rebounce" is not only a reflection on Rwanda's past but also a beacon of hope for the future. It challenges us to reflect on our own lives and the resilience we possess within us. It reminds us that no matter how difficult the circumstances, there is always a way to rise up and overcome. The book is a great contribution serving as a good reference for different disciplines History, sociology, politics and clinical psychology as well as a contribution to transitional justice, memory and identity literature.

It serves as a good reference for pedagogy of resilience for young people at different levels in secondary schools. Easy to read with simple definitions of concepts, defined from testimonies of "ordinary" people other than academic. This gives to the book a credibility to be a contribution to decolonial studies with local experiences, a basis for knowledge production. I am sure the shortcomings in the book will be

recognized and will be an inspiration for deeper and more contribution to this important thematic area.

I commend Akariza for her courage in sharing this important story with the world. "Rebounce" is a testament to her dedication to preserving memory and ensuring that the lessons of Rwanda are never forgotten. It is a call to action for all of us to stand up against prejudice and discrimination and to embrace the power of resilience in our own lives.

I am honored to have had the opportunity to read "Rebounce," and I am confident that it will inspire and enlighten readers around the world. May it serve as a reminder that, even in our darkest moments, there is always a path to rebound and rise up.

Dr Eric Ndushabandi is proud Mentor and Professor of Political science to Laurette with Expertise in Post-conflict reconstruction processes and resilience.

PROLOGUE

Before embarking on the journey that is this book, *Rebound*, I want to share a piece of my story with you. A story of trials and tribulations, of failures and resilience, and above all, a story that transformed me into the person I am today.

You see, I've always been drawn to the power of words and storytelling. From a young age, I dreamt of writing books that would touch people's hearts and make a difference in their lives. But, like many dreams, it took time and numerous setbacks before I found my path.

Before *Rebound*, there was "*Wet under the Rainbow*." It was my first published work, a collection of stories from the youth of Rwanda. These stories were a reflection of their struggles, their journey to heal, and the generational trauma they carried from the Genocide against Tutsi 1994. I penned those words when I was just 18, balancing the demands of high school with the passion to give voice to those who needed it most.

In those early days, I had no mentor, no guidebook on how to write and publish a book. I stumbled through the process, making mistakes, facing rejections, and wrestling with self-doubt. But despite the hurdles, "*Wet under the Rainbow*" became a reality, and it gave me a newfound purpose.

People began to reach out to me, strangers whose lives had intersected with the characters in my book. They'd say, "I don't know if you know me, but after reading your book, that David in your story is me." It was then that I realized the true power of storytelling—to connect us, to reveal our shared humanity.

Yet, as much as I wanted to shine a light on transgenerational trauma and the struggles of youth, I was unprepared for the emotional weight of their stories. I didn't anticipate the sleepless nights and tear-stained pages as I absorbed their pain. I felt the weight of their expectations, the belief that I was strong and wise. But in reality, I was just a young writer, carrying the burden of their stories alone.

It was in those moments of vulnerability that I discovered my own strength. I chose not to let the weight of the stories crush me but instead to use it as fuel for a greater purpose. In the midst of their pain, I found resilience—the indomitable spirit of youth who refused to succumb to the shadows of their past.

And so, the idea for Rebound was born. In October 2022, I decided that it was time to share not only the stories of struggle but also the stories of triumph. To tell you, dear reader, about the incredible resilience I witnessed in the youth of Rwanda and how they bounced back from adversity.

As you embark on this journey through Rebound, remember this: what doesn't kill you doesn't have to break you. It can make you stronger, more resilient, and more determined than ever before. There's no time to delay; you can always bounce back from whatever has laid you low. So, open your heart and mind, for within these pages, you'll discover the unbreakable spirit of those who chose to Rebound.

CHAPTER 1: The Resilience Recipe: Ingredients of Overcoming Adversity

In this book, titled "Rebound," we embark on a profound and deeply moving exploration of the concept of transgenerational resilience within the heart-wrenching context of the survivors of the Genocide against the Tutsi. This collection of narratives, reflections, and insights represents a powerful testament to the enduring strength, resilience, and determination that have been passed down from one generation to the next, like a torch lighting the way through the darkest of times.

The Genocide against the Tutsi, a dark chapter in human history, left an indelible mark, characterized by unimaginable atrocities and unfathomable suffering. It is a chapter that should never be forgotten, a testament to the capacity for cruelty that can be unleashed when hatred and intolerance go unchecked. However, amid the shadows of that harrowing period, there emerged a resilient spirit—a spirit that refused to be extinguished.

The survivors of the Genocide, individuals who bore witness to unspeakable horrors, have not only found ways to heal and rebuild their own lives but have also imparted invaluable lessons of resilience to their children and future generations. Through their unwavering determination to rise above the horrors they witnessed, they have sown the seeds of hope, strength, and survival in the hearts of their descendants.

"Rebound" delves deeply into the remarkable journeys of transgenerational resilience. It casts a spotlight on the survivors' experiences and the subsequent intergenerational transmission of strength and healing. We traverse the emotional landscapes of these individuals through personal narratives that lay bare their innermost thoughts, fears, and hopes. We engage in illuminating interviews that capture the essence of their experiences, and we analyze their stories through the lens of scholarly perspectives to gain a holistic understanding of this profound phenomenon.

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At its core, "Rebounce" is a heartfelt tribute to the survivors. It pays homage to their indomitable spirit and their commitment to ensuring that the atrocities they endured are never forgotten. It is a living testament to their extraordinary ability to bounce back from unimaginable trauma, to rebuild shattered lives, and to continue their journey with resilience that is nothing short of inspirational.

Within the pages of "Rebounce," we strive to shed light on the multifaceted dimensions of transgenerational resilience. We take a deep dive into the psychological, cultural, and societal factors that have shaped the survivors' experiences and the experiences of their children. We explore the intricate interplay between memory, identity, and resilience—a dance of emotions and experiences that define their lives. We engage with the challenges and triumphs that arise when navigating a legacy of trauma, and we learn from the wisdom that emerges from the crucible of adversity.

Through these captivating stories of transgenerational resilience, we hope to inspire, educate, and ignite conversations that foster understanding, empathy, and healing. We extend an invitation to our readers to embark on a transformative journey, one that is illuminated by the radiant power of resilience and the indomitable spirit that resides within the survivors and their descendants.

As we navigate the chapters of "Rebounce," it is incumbent upon us to honor the survivors and their courage. We must recognize the profound intergenerational impact of the Genocide against the Tutsi and celebrate the strength that has been lovingly passed down from one generation to the next. May this book serve not only as a testament to the enduring spirit of resilience but also as a fervent call to action. Let it remind us of our collective responsibility to work tirelessly towards creating a world where such heinous atrocities are never repeated—where the enduring legacy of the survivors is one of resilience, healing, and hope for a brighter future.

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Welcome to "Rebound: Transgenerational Resilience of Survivors of Genocide against Tutsi." Let us embark on this journey together, as we bear witness to the stories of survival, resilience, and hope.

Rebound is a concept of resilience that holds great significance. It refers to the remarkable ability of individuals or communities to bounce back or recover from adversity. It implies that, even when faced with incredibly difficult or challenging circumstances, people can regain their equilibrium and return to their previous level of functioning, and sometimes even surpass it. The concept of rebound underscores the idea that resilience is not just about surviving in the face of adversity; it's also about thriving and growing in the aftermath of difficult situations.

The various forms that rebound can take depend on the situation and the individuals or communities involved. For example, rebound might involve an individual overcoming a setback or failure and returning to a previous level of success, or even achieving greater success than before. It could also encompass a community's recovery from a disaster or crisis, leading to the rebuilding of stronger and more resilient infrastructure, social systems, and relationships.

Reflecting on my own experiences, I initially hesitated to share my story. I vividly recall a conversation with Dr. Catherine Gilbert, Chair of the Ishami Foundation, where she encouraged me to consider sharing my personal narrative. At the time, I questioned whether I had a story worth sharing. However, I am immensely grateful to her for taking the time to convince me that my story could inspire and uplift others. Over time, I became convinced that sharing my story, along with Aline's, could indeed make a positive impact.

The backdrop against which this discussion unfolds is the devastating Genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda 1994. This tragic event left the country in ruins, with severe consequences for mental health and social cohesion. The aftermath of the Genocide has been more profound and harrowing than one can ever imagine. We must never forget the innocent victims who perished in that massacre. As someone who has witnessed

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the journey of survivors on their path to healing, I have come to truly understand what rebound means in the face of such unspeakable tragedy.

We often celebrate the resilience of survivors of the Genocide, but it's important to acknowledge the incredible hardships they faced. Survivors did not simply allow themselves to wither away or remain defeated. They fought relentlessly to attain success. They started businesses, secured jobs, pursued education, formed families, and raised children. This was an extraordinary feat, considering not only the financial losses but also the loss of loved ones – family members, friends, and colleagues. The emotional toll of such losses cannot be underestimated, and it posed a significant obstacle to rebuilding their lives. Many survivors were young, and surviving such a heart-wrenching and merciless massacre left them grappling with severe psychological crises.

Recognizing and honoring the survivors' journey of resilience is of utmost importance. Their ability to rebound from overwhelming adversity has had a lasting impact on their children, the next generation, and Rwandan society as a whole. This enduring legacy of strength and determination has paved the way for transgenerational resilience, leaving an indelible mark on the fabric of our society.

Rebound is a concept that holds profound meaning, emphasizing the capacity of individuals and communities to not only survive adversity but also to thrive and evolve in its aftermath. In this book, I aim to convey the significance of rebound through personal stories, particularly those of survivors of the Genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda 1994. Their resilience and the enduring impact of their journey on future generations are central themes that resonate throughout this narrative.

Transgenerational resilience in Rwanda

“Imfura igenda nka se” this is the Rwandan proverb that is many years older than me, it says that the son's heroism comes from his father, in Rwanda resilience as one of the signs of braveness is taken to be hereditary, Rwandans have always believed that the father has to teach all the

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heroism practices to the children and so they pass it to their children too as generation goes, in our culture also talents as well as other clans norms pass in the family for the legacy to be continued. According to the Rwandans proverbs and sayings Rwandans have been resilient people from our old ancestor, they are sayings like “Imfura inshinjagira ishira” which means the brave people have to be patient, all of these such like the others have served to stimulate Rwandans to be brave in tough times and inspire them to aspire heroism in their everyday activities.

As explained by Dr. Arielle Schwartz *“Raising a child is one of the most courageous and vulnerable actions we can take as human beings. Shadows of the past churn and turn towards the light asking us to pay attention to unexpected feelings of ambivalence, comparison, and inadequacy in parenting. Unearthing, and addressing these feelings when they arise unwinds shame and is an essential key to healing our transgenerational attachment legacies”* After the Genocide against the Tutsi as broken as Rwandan society was, parenting and raising children was one of the challenges that Rwandans faced, As transmission of legacy was concerned there was a lot to pay attention on.

Transgenerational resilience among survivors of Genocide against Tutsi have been their ability and community to adapt and recover from the traumatic experiences of the Genocide, and to transmit their resilience to future generations. This resilience can be seen in various forms, including psychological, social, and cultural resilience.

One possible explanation for this resilience is the strong social support networks that many survivors have developed. In many cases, survivors were able to rely on the support of family and friends to help them cope with the trauma of the Genocide. Additionally, survivors may have found strength in their cultural traditions and religious beliefs, which provided them with a sense of purpose and meaning.

Another possible explanation for transgenerational resilience is the importance of education and access to resources. Many survivors have worked hard to rebuild their lives and communities, and have prioritized

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education and economic development as a means of achieving this goal. By doing so, they have been able to provide their children with greater opportunities for success and resilience.

Finally, the resilience of survivors of Genocide against Tutsi can also be attributed to their ability to create and sustain a sense of collective identity and purpose. By working together towards a common goal, such as promoting justice and reconciliation, survivors have been able to find strength and meaning in their shared experiences and aspirations.

Overall, transgenerational resilience among survivors of Genocide against Tutsi is a complex phenomenon that cannot be fully explained by any one factor. Rather, it is the result of a combination of social, cultural, economic, and political factors that have allowed survivors to adapt and thrive despite the challenges they have faced of unimaginable trauma and loss.

After writing *wet under the rainbow*, I gave my 5 friends the book to read first, as friendly as they was I didn't expect them to discourage me but what was surprising was how one of them asked "How did you think of all of that?" and I asked her "What?" and then she said "That, my life, your life, our lives." She explained to me that *wet under the rainbow* which was my book about Trans generational trauma was a true reflection of every youth in this generation. And so yes in Trans generational of legacies, parents transmits their trauma to their children as well as the society knowingly, unknowingly, directly or indirectly. Unresolved trauma of one generation is a legacy that can be passed down to the next generation.

As days passed, colleagues and youth giving me their small testimonies on how I tackled about their life, though their emphasized about the topic of the book which is *wet under the rainbow*, I always understood transmission of healing and transmission of resilience. I would always understand them telling me how their parents have rebounded, how they are trying to help their family to grow as well as preserving the memory because they knew well that it was their parents strength. This is on the

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side of the side of children of the survivors against the Tutsi which is different from the side of the children of perpetrators whom a few that we talked with were in the journey of healing and resilience as well.

Writing this book, I wished I would be in the ear of every Genocide against Tutsi 1994 survivors and whisper to them “Rebound” in their everyday struggle to heal, to get over their pain, to raise their children with all the best that they can get, to rebuild their life, to find a new family, to pass their family memories to their friends and family. And I wish also they would understand that she who is telling them learnt how to overcome challenges from them.

As I write, I want every one reading it to learn how to rebound after a certain crisis taking a lesson from Genocide against Tutsi survivors in Rwanda for their selfless resilience, let’s talk about the pillars of resilience. This is not only for our elders that passed through a lot in Genocide against Tutsi but also for their children, gran children and grand grand children, you have of rise against your history chains that pulls you down, your family shame or your inherited trauma.

SELF AWARENESS

Self-awareness, the cornerstone of understanding oneself, encompasses a profound grasp of your personality in its entirety, delving deep into the intricacies of your traits, thoughts, beliefs, motivations, and emotions. This introspective capacity not only allows you to fathom your own inner workings but also serves as a powerful lens through which you can interpret and relate to others. It grants you insight into their perceptions of you, your demeanor, and your immediate reactions in their presence.

Reflecting on a personal experience from my youth, I recall the moment when I first encountered a song dedicated to commemorating the victims of the Genocide against the Tutsi 1994. Although I was too young to fully comprehend the historical context, the overwhelming sadness that washed over me was palpable. As a child, I found myself in a state of

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emotional turmoil, shedding tears without the ability to articulate the source of my distress. I struggled to explain the profound sorrow that had gripped my heart. Moreover, I could not confront or console that helpless, weeping child within me when confronted with the harrowing accounts of the Genocide against the Tutsi.

It wasn't until later in life that I came to appreciate the significance of self-awareness as one of the fundamental pillars of resilience. Self-awareness, I realized, provides the critical framework for understanding our reactions, emotions, and, ultimately, our ability to cope with life's most challenging moments. It is through this profound awareness of self that we can begin to make sense of the inexplicable and find the strength to heal, grow, and contribute positively to the world around us.

SELF CARE

Each person's interpretation of self-care is deeply personal, and the avenues to achieve it are as diverse as the individuals themselves. At its core, self-care encompasses our innate ability as human beings to navigate life's complexities effectively, approaching daily challenges with vitality, resilience, and confidence. It is a proactive endeavor that demands our deliberate engagement and persistent upkeep, irrespective of the hurdles that can transform it into an act of resilience.

Reflecting on the significance of self-care in the context of self-awareness, I am reminded of my mother, a survivor of the Genocide against the Tutsi. She never fully grasped the importance of self-care as a foundational element of resilience. Her belief that both she and her children were "good" was a testament to her strength, but it concealed the unique wounds that every survivor of such a traumatic event carries. These wounds, though different for each individual, demand attention and care. The essence of self-care lies in addressing these wounds in ways that foster physical, mental, and emotional well-being. It equips us to manage the weight of stress and adversity, allowing us to emerge stronger and more resilient in the face of life's challenges.

MINDFULNESS

Mindfulness, a state of active and undistracted presence in the present moment, represents a profound mental condition that empowers individuals to observe their thoughts and emotions from a standpoint of impartiality, devoid of judgment. It beckons us to fully engage with the unfolding experience of life rather than merely allowing it to slip through our fingers. Have you ever paused to scrutinize your existence and realized that you are, in essence, merely going through the motions? It's a realization that the adversities and trials you confront, much like the challenges in life, contribute to your growth and inner strength. Mindfulness invites you to turn inward, to explore your thoughts and emotions with an open and accepting heart, acknowledging them as they are, without the weight of criticism or denial.

It's a practice that encourages taking deliberate action, stepping towards your goals, and making decisions that align with your values and aspirations. In the gentle dance between awareness and action, mindfulness becomes a guiding light, illuminating the path to a more purposeful and enriched life.

SOCIAL SUPPORT

The support of family, friends, and the wider community stands as an indispensable cornerstone of resilience, providing a robust foundation upon which one can navigate life's challenges. The presence of a support network is not merely a comforting presence but rather a lifeline during times of stress and trauma. It acts as a buffer against the relentless waves of adversity, offering solace and strength when it is needed most. Within this context, consider the significance of a group that not only comprehends your experiences but actively supports you; it plays an integral role in your resilience journey. Take, for instance, the poignant example of AERG (Association des Élèves Rescapés du Génocide contre les Tutsi).

Countless testimonies bear witness to how this organization has been instrumental in helping individuals confront the psychological difficulties

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stemming from their traumatic past and providing a channel for them to cope with profound loss. As we embark on this journey together through the pages of this book, you will gain deeper insights into how AERG's support played a pivotal role in my own path towards resilience, illustrating the profound impact of collective support on an individual's ability to heal and thrive.

POSITIVE BELIEFS AND ATTITUDES

Sustaining positive beliefs and attitudes emerges as a potent force that can propel individuals forward, maintaining their motivation and unwavering focus, even when confronted with the most formidable of adversities. This positive outlook encompasses a spectrum of attributes, including optimism, self-efficacy, and a profound sense of purpose or meaning in one's life. It is entirely understandable how, in the aftermath of a harrowing experience such as the Genocide against the Tutsi, individuals might find themselves adrift, their sense of life's purpose obscured by the traumatic events they have endured.

In the wake of such profound tragedy, where the future may seem bleak and uncertain, the importance of forging a path toward prosperity becomes even more evident. It begins with rediscovering the purpose of life and cultivating a positive mindset that envisions a brighter future. This transformational journey reflects the indomitable human spirit's capacity not only to survive but also to thrive, anchored in the enduring power of hope and a steadfast belief in the possibility of a better tomorrow.

ADAPTABILITY AND FLEXIBILITY

The capacity to adapt and display flexibility in the face of evolving circumstances is undeniably one of the vital components of resilience. It's an attribute that allows individuals not only to weather the storms of life but also to thrive amid change. This adaptability hinges on the willingness to be receptive to fresh ideas and alternative viewpoints, as well as the readiness to explore innovative problem-solving approaches. From the vantage point of my life experiences within a resilient society, I've gleaned invaluable insights into this facet of resilience. I'm truly delighted to share