



ASPIRE stories

Alphonine Uwimana

In Huye District, Alphonine Uwimana serves her community as both a judge and a member of a school parents' committee. For years her work meant applying the law, listening to cases, weighing evidence, and delivering judgments.

Then came a shift in perspective that changed everything. Through Peace and Values Education (PVE) training supported by the Aegis Trust, Alphonine came to understand something that formal legal training rarely teaches: justice is not only about decisions. It is about understanding people.

At the heart of her training was active listening; the kind that goes beyond hearing words to uncovering what lies beneath them. The anger, the silence, the unspoken hurt that so often drives conflict.

David worked for Lydia. In a moment of desperation, he stole fertilizers belonging to her; a serious breach of trust between an employer and the person she had relied on. The situation escalated quickly. Lydia, feeling wronged and determined to seek justice, pursued the matter through formal channels, including the police and the court system. David faced the real possibility of imprisonment.

When the case reached Alphonine, she chose a different path. Rather than proceeding directly to trial, she brought them together for a mediation conversation - creating space for each of them to speak openly and to truly hear the other.

In that conversation, something shifted. David acknowledged what he had done and asked for forgiveness. And Lydia, after everything she had been through, made a decision that surprised even herself.

Alphonsine Uwimana

"I had spent so much time seeking justice, but it only took one conversation to find peace. I chose to forgive him and today I am happy he did not go to prison." - Lydia, mediation participant

The case was resolved, not through punishment, but through accountability, forgiveness and reconciliation. A powerful demonstration of what becomes possible when people feel genuinely heard.

Since her training, Alphonsine has brought mediation into the heart of her daily work, resolving disputes early, often before they escalate into formal proceedings. She has also shared these skills with fellow judges, helping to build a culture of dialogue within the justice system itself.

The results have been significant. Her efforts contributed to a reduction in cases reaching Ngoma Primary Court - and Ndora Primary Court, where she served after the training, was ranked third nationally in mediation outcomes.

Alphonsine's story shows that sometimes, the most powerful tool in justice is not authority but the ability to listen. Through the values of peace, she is helping reshape how her community resolves conflict. From confrontation to conversation. From judgment to understanding. From division to healing. Because when people feel truly heard, they are more willing to change, to forgive, and to move forward together.

Justice, at its deepest, is not just a verdict. It is a conversation.

