

Chapter Four:

AMAHORO

Building peace in Rwanda

Working title...

Written on the international day of peace on September 21st 2014

Quotes:

'Umntu ngumuntu ngabantu' (I am because you are) A Zulu proverb

'We cannot turn the clock back nor can we undo the harm caused, but we have the power to determine the future and to ensure that what happened never happens again.' Paul Kagame, Rwandan President.

...Unpublished

Preface

'Each year, the International Day of Peace is observed around the world on 21 September. The General Assembly has declared this as a day devoted to strengthening the ideals of peace, both within and among all nations and peoples.

The International Day of Peace was established in 1981 by resolution 36/67. The first Peace Day was observed in September 1982. In 2001, the General Assembly by unanimous vote adopted resolution 55/282, which established 21 September as an annual day of non-violence and cease-fire. The United Nations invites all nations and people to honour a cessation of hostilities during the Day, and to otherwise commemorate the Day through education and public awareness on issues related to peace.¹ The theme of this year: '**Right of Peoples to Peace**' marks the 30th anniversary of the General Assembly Declaration on the Right of Peoples to Peace.

The celebration of the international day of peace is of particular importance for this region, which, for more than two decades, has been plagued by massive human suffering and deprivation due to conflict. This booklet aims at providing the readers with an overview of the situation of violence and how we can build strong partnerships to eradicate it. It describes the stabilisation and peace-building trajectory taken by the Rwandan government, using homegrown solutions, and calls on the youth of the region to be pioneers of peace, drawing on lessons from Rwanda. It is recognition, an encouragement for all peace promoters around the world to continue their work of making the world a better place.

It is our utmost wish that on this day of peace, no one is killed, raped or displaced by conflict; that it serves as the day of reprieve, that the wounded are treated, that hostages are released, that the oppressed are freed from the yoke of oppression and exploitation in our beloved region and around the world.

Have a free and happy peace day!

¹ United Nations <http://www.un.org/en/events/peaceday/>, consulted on 9/9/2014 5PM

TABLE OF CONTENT

Preface 2

Introduction. 4

Importance of the international day of peace 4

I. Background..... 5

 1. *Key definitions* 5

II. African concept of peace: ‘Ubuntu’..... 6

 2. *Predators to African peace structures* 7

III. Efforts made by Rwanda to consolidate peace. 10

IV. *Gacaca* jurisdictions..... 12

 3. *The Rwandan constitution, a foundation for peace.* 13

 4. Human rights as a measure to achieve peace 14

 5. The participation of women to consolidating peace..... 17

 6. Tackling poverty to consolidate peace 17

Conclusion..... 18

Introduction.

Importance of the international day of peace

Peace is the springboard for social and economic growth, Cultural Revolution and development as a whole. Without peace regional youth may not thrive; no lasting growth will be registered; investments may not grow, education not pursued, and talents stalled.

Peace is difficult to achieve however, within a context of poverty, deep ethnical divide, corruption, poverty, ignorance, weak institutions, and against a backdrop of violent interracial tensions, all which currently prevail among countries of the Great Lakes Region.

Selfish leaders have surfed on our real or imagined differences to maintain themselves into positions of power while continuing to exploit us. As the youth we shouldn't have let them; we shouldn't let them! Yes they have failed us, but we have failed ourselves too.

The youth has been at the centre of conflicts in the great lakes region. They have served as executioners and victims in conflicts. In both roles, the regional youth has been victimised in the sense that conflicts have impeded their agency to optimise on their impressive potential to realise their dreams.

However, while the youth has served as martyrs and foes, many have risen to fight in a heroic and concerted effort, to overcome and triumph against oppression.

The challenges ahead are not insurmountable. With a mobilised and peace-seeking youth, it can be transformed into a resolute to break away with the past and to build a different future; a peaceful and prosperous one. There is no doubt that regional conflicts will be beaten down by our youth.

Our time is now, we need to leverage on our joint historical heritage; a massive body of African mores on conflict management as sources of inspiration for each other.

I. Background

1. *Key definitions*

Peace: The United Nations does not explicitly define peace. The UN Charter refers to peace as ‘the lack of war’. The dictionary however, defines it as ‘the normal; non-warring condition of a nation or a group of nations, (2) a state of mutual harmony between people or groups, (3) the normal freedom from civil commotion and violence of a community; public order and security:

Violence: the World Health Organisation (WHO) defines violence as the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, which either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment, or deprivation².

However, during community dialogues conducted by Never Again Rwanda as part of the preparation of the international day of peace, new form of violence emerged. Residents of Huye and Bugesera see recurrent forms violence: for them, violence also includes: bribes, poor service delivery, not having one’s problem resolved by the line local authority, arbitrary illegal expropriation; genocide ideology, etc.

The State: Art. 1 of the Montevideo Convention on Rights and Duties of States³ stipulates that the state as a person of international law should possess the following qualifications: (a) *a permanent population*; (b) *a defined territory*; (c) *government*; and (d) *capacity to enter into relations with other states*.

Failed State: When assessed within a-conflict or post-conflict context, the definition of the State should be read with that of failed state. While there are no scientific definition of a failed State, some primary characteristics would help identify states that fall under the category: failed states lack independent and effective democratic institutions; they cause citizen’s suffering or are unable to protect citizens from violence and suffering; they can no longer perform basic functions such as security, governance, education, fight poverty among the people, etc., usually due to fractious violence or

² Source: WHO <http://www.who.int/topics/violence/en/> accessed on 20 September 2014

³ The Montevideo convention was *Signed at Montevideo on December 26, 1933*

extreme poverty. Within this power vacuum, people fall victim to competing factions and crime, and sometimes the United Nations or neighboring states intervene to prevent a humanitarian disaster.⁴

II. African concept of peace: 'Ubuntu'⁵

(Extract from the book: *Advocacy in Sub-Saharan Africa*)

Ubuntu is an African concept of fraternity and humanness. The word has the same meaning across African languages. From Zulu to Kiswahili, Kinyarwanda and Luganda, etc.⁶

In his book, *No Future without Forgiveness*, Archbishop Desmond Tutu speaks of *Ubuntu* in these words: "when we [Africans, Zulus] want to give high praise to someone we say, 'Yu, u nobuntu'; 'Hey, so-and-so has *ubuntu*.' Then you are generous, you are hospitable, you are friendly and caring and compassionate. You share what you have. It is so to say, 'My humanity is inextricably bound up in yours.' He proceeds: 'we belong to a bundle of life.' We say, 'A person is a person through other persons'⁷

In Rwanda, when we say, 'ufite ubuntu', we mean literally the same thing as in Zulu, both semantically and ideologically. Why is it that Rwandan elders reasoned exactly in the same way as Zulu elders? And Congolese, and Nigerians, etc. This reality suggests that, as Africans we are one nation, afterall, all bound by the principle of humanness: 'Ubuntu'

This concept is a cornerstone for the '*ujamaa*' in Tanzania, '*Harambee*' in Kenya, '*bulungi bwa nsi* (for the good of the community) in Uganda, Teranga in Senegal, '*Gada*' in Ethiopia, '*Umuganda*' and the most recent '*Ndi umunyarwanda*' in Rwanda; to name but a few.

⁴ Global Policy Forum: Failed States, <http://www.globalpolicy.org/nations-a-states/failed-states.html>, accessed on the 13th March 2012

⁵ Gatete *The 'Ubuntu' Concept* (2014) *Advocacy in Sub-Saharan Africa* 34

⁶ M Mpungose 'Debating African Ubuntu' (2011) *Letsema Center for Development and Democracy* <http://letsemacentre.org/contents/publications/debates/ubuntu-sub001.html> (accessed October 18 2013)

⁷ D. Tutu *No Future without Forgiveness* (1999) 31

These inward-looking, yet not insular concepts, underpin Africa's identity of peace, conflict management, cohesion and fraternity; in other words: this is what defines Africa: unity in diversity; generosity and acceptance of the other.

Africans considered that one draws one's relevance, power and survival in numbers. A human's survival is attached to kin, family, clan and nation's survival at large.

Many of the past African conquerors and chiefs of our time have sought to marry women from potentially antagonistic clans as a measure to establish inter-ethnic bonds and mitigate inter-clans' conflicts. In the 'Gada' government system⁸ practiced before colonisation, by the *Oromo* community in Ethiopia; violations of rights were handled communally. The deeds of one, affected all. The guilt of a kin brought shame to all kinsmen, and subsequent appeasements were handled by all. Up until this day in the Somali community, cases of homicide are handled by the whole clan. Each family, member of the clan, contribute to the agreed compensation, usually fixed at 100 camels for one life lost, offered as a gesture of allegiance, reprieve and restoration - to avert circles of violence.⁹

These are some of the many measures used by African elders to negotiate human rights while maintaining traditional bonds across ethnic lines, to ultimately foster peace in the land. In ancient Africa, reconciliation and conflict resolution were the only infrastructure to enforce individual security. Indeed there was no police and prisons nor electric fences. People lived in grass-thatched houses with wooden fences. If a person meant harm to another, he had only to strike a spear from outside the hut, while his victim slept. This though, did not generally occur as it was the duty of the community at large to safeguard every one of its members. The *Zulu* saying: '*Umntu ngumuntu ngabantu*'; I am person because I am among people, captures the context eloquently.

2. *Predators to African peace structures*

'We need to use our processes to achieve the aim of assisting humanity, as opposed to preserving our processes at the expense of humanity.' Lt. Gen. Romeo Dallaire, former head of the UN

⁸ H Tusso 'indigenous processes of conflict resolution in Oromo society' (2000) in IW Zartman (ed) *Traditional cures for modern conflicts: African conflict 'medicine'* Boulder, Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers

⁹ A Aboqor *The Camel in Somali oral tradition* trans A Xange (1986) 37

peacekeeping mission to Rwanda, retired senator, writer of ‘Shake Hands with the Devil’.

The advent of alien concepts has eroded our *ubuntu* as Africans, as Rwandans. Suffering and exploitation, experienced overtime have strayed us from the essential; from what defines us; our identity! But we have reclaimed it; our human spirit has triumphed and continues to thrive.

This section is a tale of *Ubuntu* as the foundation for peace in Rwanda. It highlights the golden thread that cuts across African ethnic diversity; the bond that is shared by Africans.

Africa’s *ubuntu*, the foundation of our peace-building methods was devastatingly affected by colonialism and neo-colonialism; leading to everlasting conflicts around the continent - still to date. The individualistic worldview purported by neo-liberalism, is somewhat at odds with the values held strongly on the *Ubuntu* continent. The concept: *everyone for himself and God above us all*, is alien to Africa, and it was bound to clash with the African concept of life. Indeed the two proverbs cannot be further apart. The fact that African nations have not thrived in the current international world order is perhaps because it is dispensed and operated in a code system that is not suitable for African culture, African bioethics, traditions and identity.

In an interview, Jerry Rawlings, Ghana’s former president remarked: ‘*during the cold war, we were caught up in a cross fire between the east and the west to such an extend that it was difficult for us to even be Africans.*’¹⁰

The cold war was a crucial period for the emergence of the corpus of international human law. *The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR)*¹¹, the *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)*¹² were promoted by the capitalist block while the *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR)*¹³ emerged from the communist bloc.

Indeed, the world’s law as we know it today, was highly inspired by both concepts of communism and capitalism; two social, economic and political discourses that were

¹⁰ Film ‘Thomas Sankara the upright man’ (2006) Director Robin Shuffield

¹¹ UDHR: Adopted by the UN General Assembly on 10 December 1948,

¹² ICCPR: Adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1966 entry into force 23 March 1976,

¹³ ICESCR: Adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1966, and entry into force from 3 January 1976

conceived, discussed and espoused by countries in the east and the west, which had time to shape their societies and systems to either of these models. Naturally the success of each model depended on the ability of its proponents to shape the world as conducive a space for the model to thrive – hence the cold war.

This was being done by both worlds with no consideration of Africans, most of whom were still under the yoke of colonisation; a typical way of dealing with Africa since time immemorial. No doubt around the table, were some of the colonialists who claimed to ‘know’ Africans and speak for them...

Human rights were hence brought to Africa, in the same package, as were colonialism and religion. At each occasion, African ways were deemed savage, ungodly and backward, before being swiftly replaced by the ways of the occupant of the time.

Alas, the cold war ended with the defeat of communism, and the capitalists proceeded to shape the world in their image. **Margaret Thatcher, former Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, once declared: ‘there is no such thing as society. There are individual men and women, and there are families.’**¹⁴ Such an insular worldview, from a person once considered as the most powerful woman on the planet. However, she was merely expressing a worldview of the capitalist...

The African continent, whose social structures are based on kinship, lineage and customary allegiance; whose peoples’ most basic rights, such as the right to food, shelter, health and education had not been guaranteed, had no chance of succeeding in such world order.

At first, the prioritisation was welcomed amidst African independence struggles and peoples’ self-determination. African priorities were to acquire first class status and citizenship; not being treated as slaves, colonised, occupied or segregated. That time, as far as Africa is concerned is obsolete. Since independence was achieved, new forms of oppression and suffering have emerged, including neo-liberalism, the oppression of social classes and the use of power to people’s exploitation, leading to chronicle poverty and disparity; all leading to conflict.

¹⁴ ‘Epitaph of the eighties there is no such thing as society’ Margaret Thatcher talking to Women's Own magazine *The Times UK* October 31 1987 <http://briandeer.com/social/thatcher-society.htm>

III. Efforts made by Rwanda to consolidate peace.

Upon independence, a racist regime took over power and proceeded to practice politics of systematic exclusion and oppression of a minority group. Tutsis from Rwanda were hunted down and killed, while many fled to neighbouring countries, mainly Burundi, the DRC, Uganda and Tanzania. From then, recurrent massacres of Tutsis who had remained in the country continued in total impunity, and Tutsis in exile were denied return to their motherland. This led those in exile to form a rebel movement to force their return home, but upon arrival, they found over one million of their relatives brutally massacred. Hutus who resisted the genocide agenda were also killed alongside their Tutsi counterparts.

The genocide was not a spontaneous and abrupt process; it was not an accident. It was a deliberated, premeditated action, planned and rolled out in phases over a relatively long period. The period building-up to ethnic clash is a determinant: dehumanisation, exclusion, oppression, blame-game and other forms of stigmatisation of one ethnic group, all preludes to forthcoming open ethnic conflicts. Unfortunately, these phases tend to find momentum in populists and opportunistic politicians; they are convenient for extremists and offer a lifeline to some NgOs.

However, no citizen is inherently connected to their individual ethnic difference. No one bears deep hatred towards the next tribe that they would not respond to processes of unity and reconciliation such as 'we are all Rwandans'. It is against that backdrop, that both the government and the civil society have initiated programmes aimed at deconstructing the genocide ideology in all its forms through programs of peace.

From the government, these programmes include:

Ndi umunyarwanda¹⁵: A programme aimed at building a national identity based on trust and truth. It is a process where willing Rwandans come forward to share testimonies of during the genocide, share their feelings and experiences of living in Rwandan in its aftermath and today and apologize on behalf of their individual ethnic groups;

¹⁵ <http://www.ndiumunyarwanda.rw/> accessed on the 19/09/2014

A **National Commission for Genocide Prevention**, established by the Rwandan constitution, while a **department of Genocide prevention** was opened at the University of Rwanda.

Itorero Ry'igihugu: the national civic education program, aimed at teaching national values to Rwandan youth. These values have also been introduced in the school curriculum

Kwibuka: The annual commemoration of the genocide committed against Tutsis, from the 7th April. In its 20th edition this year, the commemoration was held under the theme: Remember, Unite, Renew.

The civil society also conducts many programs aimed at fostering dialogue and national cohesion for a peaceful future of Rwanda. Only a few will be mentioned here:

Never Again Rwanda, which focuses on the youth, organizes Summer Peace-Building Institutes (PBI) annually. PBI is a two-week school that brings local and foreign university students to Rwanda, to share readings and sources; attend public lectures on the theme: 'What can Rwanda teach the world?' exploring questions of genocide, transitional justice, good governance, etc.

Shalom Educating for Peace organizes the African Alliance for Peace Summit during the genocide commemoration period annually. The conference seeks to bringing together people to discuss ways to avoid the reoccurrence of an atrocity such as the genocide. The last summit held under the theme 'Promoting Peace Education in our Communities' gathered participants from 11 countries including Rwanda, Burundi, DR Congo, Sierra Leone, Ethiopia, Kenya, Cameroon, Uganda, Zimbabwe, and South Africa.

AEGIS Trust, Radio labenevolencja, and the Institute of Research and Dialogue for Peace (IRDP) organize in partnership with the California-based USC Shoah Foundation: the Rwanda Peace Education programme among youth in the community. Discussions are held on what, how, when and why the Genocide happened, the aftermath consequences and strategies of coping with it and discussing principal instruments of social change.

But the most important program conducted in Rwanda at the wake of the genocide, is undoubtedly the Gacaca Jurisdictions.

IV. *Gacaca* jurisdictions.

'When a conflict resolution process is directed toward short-and long-term goals, which really extend into the field of human relations, at least a double advantage can result. Not only will the eventual stages of implementation and follow-up be more far and wide-reaching. The whole procedure of resolving the conflict will also be regarded to be what it actually is: an event in the continuum of social life.' Prof. Jannie Malan, Researcher, Author of 'Conflict resolution wisdom from Africa'

Peace building actions are complex, yet crucial in post-conflict states in order to avoid relapses. However they have often times been thwarted by the lack of political will to take some difficult and unpopular decisions, resist temptation for quick fixes, transcend anger and resentments and deliver on promises.

Faced with an overwhelming genocide caseload following the Genocide perpetrated against Tutsis, the Rwandan government reverted to its traditional *Gacaca* courts¹⁶ as a measure to bring perpetrators to justice in a community based jurisdiction, while mending its deeply affected social fabric. The *Gacaca* courts were seen as the only solution. Peter Uvin described them as 'a brilliant piece of work' politically. *Gacaca*, he said, offered to all groups; survivors and prisoners alike, hope and a reason to participate.¹⁷

However their implementation would become another painful experience. Horrible memories were revived, as victims were confronted to their tormentors in daylong trials, where they were mocked and stigmatized and their still unhealed wound pricked afresh. They also faced the risk of exposure to new threats from perpetrators, keen to silence them. It took massive efforts, in terms of outreach, awareness and sometimes constrains to get all the parties to participate. And when they did, this changed perspectives. The whole truth of the genocide and a process of closure began to unfold. Survivors were increasingly learning where their relatives had been dumped and being

¹⁶ R Kuusipalo 'Gacaca Courts' (2011) *Participedia* <http://participedia.net/en/cases/gacaca-courts> (accessed October 18 2013)

¹⁷ P. Uvin quoted in J Parker 'Justice no a Hill: Genocide trials in Rwanda' (2002) *Dissent* 49 2 www.dissentmagazine.org/archives/2002/sp02/parker.shtml.

given a chance to bury them in dignity, which almost automatically brought to them some peace of mind and aspirations. Those wrongly accused were being released, while the cooperative defendants received commuted sentences.

Some realities did not go away though; they still haven't. They include large populations of orphans and child headed households and many widows and widowers. They also include women who carry the scourge of rape; some of whom bore children of their rapists; They include those living with trauma; those whose parents still live in jail, in exile or whose whereabouts remain unknown, to date.

Of all the things Rwanda has been given credit for, in the last twenty years, the most important thus far, was to achieve individual dignity. We turned our challenges into opportunities. While time and money constraints prevented us from embarking of classical lawsuits in trying genocide perpetrators, the *Gacaca* turned out to be a much more encompassing and unifying process.

Indeed, courts of law could only produce a winner and a loser, the *Gacaca* managed to produce two reconciled parties. How couldn't they? In the *Gacaca* there was no prosecutors nor lawyers, there were men and women of integrity and eyewitnesses; there was no legal mumbo-jumbo; everything was real, in plain local language; there was no code, there was common sense; there was no force of law and heavy sentences, there was decency, humanity and learning; there was no grudge, there was reconciliation; there was no revenge, there was a love story.

However, many other factors threatened Rwanda's lasting peace; genocide ideology, poverty and ethnic tensions, resulted from the genocide.

In order to mitigate them Rwanda took the following steps:

3. The Rwandan constitution, a foundation for peace.

The genocide committed against the Tutsis has shaped Rwanda's future, for better or worse. While the past cannot be undone, Rwanda's the future is being almost entirely shaped to ensure that never, ever again shall we experience genocide. No other documents illustrates the Never Again resolute than the Rwandan constitution.

The promulgation of the new constitution of the Republic of Rwanda on 23 May 2003 brought hope to an entire nation. Its elaboration drew spectacular participation.

Rwandans traveled from all corners of the globe to come and contribute. The new constitution was entrenched in values of unity, equality (including gender equality) and social justice. It envisioned an open and democratic society and sought to fight the ideology of genocide, promote dialogue and consensus as way of resolving differences of opinion. Needless to say that this constitution was overwhelmingly voted by a population, traumatized and appalled by the horrors of ethnic stigmatization and eager to embrace unifying and progressive policies.

The bill of rights enshrined therein, offered a human rights framework for all Rwandans. It also provided for the establishment of a National Human Rights Commission, the Office of the Ombudsman, the Annual National Dialogue, the National *Itorero*, and many more such mechanisms that would foster dialogue and peace among Rwandans. These mechanisms were not perfect; they were bold experimentations that required adjustments along the way. However the mere fact of establishing them and the resolve by the leadership to involve all citizens provided the needed momentum and unity of purpose.

With the conducive constitution in place, human rights activists found space to promote peace. Genocide ideology had been taught in schools. It was only logical therefore to target the same schools with messages of oneness: *Ndi Umunyarwanda* and human rights. Living within the Rwandan context, students had an inbuilt human rights based approach and an attraction for peace-building messages. The overall response was incredibly positive; many participated in debate competitions on human rights issues, unity and reconciliation, Gacaca, etc., with extraordinary enthusiasm and creativeness. Then students at the National University of Rwanda, the youth came together and founded human rights organizations- including Never Again Rwanda. Women survivors' associations emerged and thrived. Over time, this has shaped a subliminal attitude in people's interactions.

4. The agency for peace

It is important to view conflicts as non-isolated events in their social context. Such a perspective is not narrowly focused on a conflict and its resolution. It takes into account the cultural context setting and the social context. It looks at the history of

preceding events, which have led up to the conflict concerned. And while concentrating on the conflict itself and the process of resolving it, it takes possible implications for the future seriously.¹⁸

A typical immediate goal is to reach an agreement, which includes more than merely solving the problem or rectifying the injustice. What is specifically aimed at in the search for durable peace, is genuine reconciliation and, where necessary, restitution and rehabilitation.

Ethnic divide undermine peace, democracy and human rights. For democracy to be effective, citizen should have non-ethnic criteria of selecting their leaders, the concept of the rule of the majority does not mean that the majority ethnic group should rule, but rather that the majority of adults from all ethnic groups vote for the candidate or political party with the most appealing political ideas. A democratic culture should be built for citizen to be able to exercise a responsible, not sentimental democratic right of electing their leaders.

Once in power, leaders in post conflict countries have a peculiar responsibility to uphold good-governance in order to maintain the stability:

1. Good Governance

‘Good governance is defined as a set of policies that are conducive to sustainable human development, job creation through private sector development; that are practiced by a government which is democratic, decentralised, empowering and accountable to a strong judiciary that ensures the protection of the rule of law and guarantees human rights’¹⁹

Good governance is a skill, a culture, acquired by adequate grooming. It is also a choice; a difficult one, by vanguard leaders, to resist the corruption of absolute power.

¹⁸ Malan, J *Conflict resolution wisdom from Africa* (1997) Durban: ACCORD

¹⁹ Good Governance and Development, B.C. SMITH, P.4-5

In previous regimes, leaders had been rather parsimonious when it comes to investing in transparency and civic competence. Just like the colonialists before them, they privileged patronage and political rent-seeking, in order to maintain themselves on power. This predictably destroyed institutions as well as citizens' confidence in the state.

In his book: 'Un genocide Populaire' (a popular genocide), the author, Jean Paul Kimonyo explains how citizens frustrations and anger towards a failing government were exploited and channeled towards the Tutsi scapegoat, government explaining its cracking down on freedoms, its failure to deliver services, etc., as all caused by the enemy - the Tutsi. With the help of the infamous *media of hate*, the population ended-up believing and buying into the killing agenda.

At the end of the genocide, the new government found many casualties, both physical and psychological. However, it had a proverbial imperative to move on, usher in stability and progress. It needed Tutsis, Twas and Hutus to be seized of the same sense of agency and pick up their pieces and get on with their lives. There was no time to cry. While we all bore grief in our heart, we would cry but we would work at the same time. Some people had to be strong for others. The government constantly reassured the population that what appeared to be insurmountable challenges, were in fact possible; They took survivors and made them entrepreneurs and community leaders; widows were made community judges; orphans and child soldiers became carpenters, artists and school students; even known genocidaires were enlisted into the regular army; after serving their sentence that is.

Hill after hill, Rwandans had to learn to live together in harmony under the Rwandan sun. Ironically, the bitter experience also became a propellant, catalyzing the resolve by the Rwandan people to endure and survive at any cost. In the end, that would define our recovery story; arguably one of the most remarkable turnarounds orchestrated by a people and a nation in recent history.

5. The participation of women to consolidating peace

Women have the greatest stake in peace. Their resilience but also the susceptibility are spectacular. They are the most affected by conflicts, because, during war, they choose to move at the pace of the most vulnerable of us.

Once peace is achieved, its consolidation is inextricably linked with the emancipation of women. They are the first to mend the pieces and imagine avenues for livelihood for their families. In Rwanda for example in the aftermath of the genocide against Tutsis, they were at the forefront of repairing the torn social fabric; they took in genocide orphans, embarked on trauma counselling for survivors, and officiating in the *Gacaca* courts as Judges and trauma counselors. This emancipation of women was due to three things; first, they were part of the early pioneers of the struggle that stopped the genocide and liberated the country. Second, they played a much-limited role in the killings compared to their male counterparts. And finally, having gone through a horrific time, Rwandans were in need of solace, which only women could provide.

Widows of the genocide founded associations to support each other. Eventually other women joined in, wives of perpetrators and other non-widows alike. They organized themselves to learn trauma counseling and help each other recover; they started joint income generating activities. This was a critical phase in the reconstruction process and in the emergence of a human rights movements; the phase of association and mutual support. Faced with tremendous challenges, women came together, became more empowered, ready to take initiatives, ready to endure, ready to move on. That was a rejection of victimization and a sign of remarkable resilience.

6. Tackling poverty to consolidate peace

The proponents of democracy as the main and ultimate cure for conflict and catalyst for peace may have somewhat oversold their wire. The people will not eat democracy. While democracy may be manifested through the exercise of citizens' political rights, it should also guarantee other social economic rights, such as education, employment, housing, etc. In other words, full democracy should provide a perspective for youth. Equal access to opportunities has proven more efficient in toning down resentments.

In spite of obvious impediments, such as being landlocked, scarcity of natural resources, high population density and regional conflicts, post genocide Rwanda has made remarkable social economic prowess. By 2013, Rwanda **had lifted one million people out of poverty in 5 years**; what Prof. Paul Collier, Author of “*The Bottom Billion*”, called an impressive developmental ‘*hat trick*’, characterised by rapid growth, sharp poverty reduction and reduced inequality.

The bet is that overtime; people will have something to share, rather than scheming against each other. The youth will be busy transforming their lives and looking up to their perspective, rather than idly being manipulated by extremists. The bet has paid of; thus far...

Today Rwanda is at peace. While there remains a long way to go, systems are firmly on track. Most humanitarian charities have voluntarily left, and their offices were taken over by investment companies. This, surprisingly, is the best indicator of a peaceful country, for we know, all too well, that the only devise that could consolidate the unity and peace in our country will remain its economic progress.

Conclusion

In Rwanda, upon defeat, the genocide regime, and probably the rest of the world feared a free-for-all orgy of revenge. This was not to be as they drew on their *Ubuntu* to forgive, unite and move on. At the same time the post-genocide government faced an insurmountable amount of genocide cases to put to trial, without the adequate human or financial means for the task. Once again, they found a way, taping into homegrown solutions to address issues that afflicted them; issues that while had conventional academic answers, were better served by harnessing traditional, historical, cultural methods, all inspired by *Ubuntu*.

Today Rwandan youth have an opportunity to grow-up in a peaceful country, where, no mater which background they come from, their dreams are valid. They are the custodians of something extraordinary; a peaceful country. They should remain alert to the fact that peace is a responsibility; an earning, not a handout. The current peace needs nurturing, its gains consolidated. They have a critical role to play in insuring that nothing comes to destabilize it. They should turn a deaf ear to anyone sawing division in them, for they are no strangers to the consequences of that

