

The Nature of Reconstruction and Reconciliation Programs in Rwanda: The Place of Women

By

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INTRODUCTION

The central argument espoused in this work is that the ultimate objective of reconstruction and reconciliation programs in a post-conflict civil society is to bring people together. Therefore the involvement of NGOs, Humanitarian assistance programs, and other international donor agents in collaboration with the national government must, out of necessity, enhance a “process of rebuilding social relations, bring people together, breaking down the barriers and prejudice” which often play such a huge role in generating political, economic and social conflict in a society (Graeme Simpson 1997:3). This work focuses on the post genocide Rwandan society. It posits that in matters of post-conflict reconciliation and reconstruction, women are the most vital organs in any civil society. This is because women are agents of restoration of broken relations and broken places, particularly in regard to the process of reconciliation, healing, feeding the entire population, caring for the sick and heartbroken, and soothing the rough edges of the landscape of human life in times of war, conflict and even in the refugee camps. Women are also agents of restoration of the broken places in the sense that they are the source of the production and reproduction of the much needed labor supply for the reconstruction of the civil society.

Therefore, this work interrogates the various reconstruction and reconciliation programs in an effort to assess the degree and the impact of their political, economics and social empowerment of women, and how women have translated and utilized this empowerment to mobilize and sensitize the grassroots as well as national levels as a means of combating the recidivist pressures that are likely to influence the recurrence of conflict. Specifically, the work considers the establishment of the National Unity and Reconciliation Commission in 1999 as one of the most important programs which the new Government of Rwanda instituted in its attempt to deal with the challenging issues emanating from the rejection and violation of the humanistic moral code – thou shall not kill. It assesses the places of women in the National Unity and Reconciliation Commission to determine the impact of women’s efforts towards reconciliation and reconstruction in post conflict Rwanda.

Conclusively the paper puts forward the argument that the success of the various post conflict reconstruction and reconciliation programs require concerted efforts from all concerned including the grassroots and national levels. It further poses the following questions:

- Are the modalities of the various programs designed by the Rwandans themselves, and if not, can internationalization of the programs with diversified groups of individuals involved effectively lead to reconciliation and reconstruction without polarization within the Rwandan civil society?
- When issues of reconciliation, reconstruction and justice are internationalized, how does the state coordinate and balance such developments with the national

- political, economic, and social agendas contained in the national development plan for the transformation of the society, so that recidivist pressures that lead to conflict are avoided?
- Is reconciliation between the perpetrators of the genocide and the victims possible and can justice and reconciliation be attained at the same time?
 - Finally, considering the importance of the Gacaca courts at the national state, can internationalization of justice ensure reconciliation and justice without conflict with the local system? These are some of the nagging and haunting questions that this paper aims to address.

The Impact of Conflict on the Rwandan Society

In her assessment of the devastating effects of conflicts in the human society, Simpson (1997:1) asserts, “ War, or intense and violent conflict, causes massive social dislocation, and taints or destroys social relations – from national, political relationships to very basic human interactions – whether through racism, violence against women, or destruction of families. It also destroys economic infrastructure.” She further identifies some of the basic assumptions that form the taproot of the international donor assistance for the purposes of reconstruction and reconciliation in post-conflict societies. The first assumption is that the provision of “economic reconstruction,” stable jobs, and income sources” would, indeed, eventually “help reconstruction process” (Simpson, 1997).

The second assumption is the notion that the post conflict country would benefit directly from external assistance with usually very little consideration for the actual role of the local people at the grassroots and national levels in the process of reconstruction and reconciliation. These assumptions, however, do not reveal the real picture of what is experienced by those affected by the conflict.

In the case of Rwanda, for instance, the U.S has been a leader in the country’s support in the aftermath of the 1994 genocide. The US has provided over \$700 million to Rwanda in humanitarian development and economic assistance (usinfo.state.gov, 2004). Yet, despite this noble and generous funding including those from other sources, statistics tend to reveal that by 2002 Rwanda was rated at 162nd out of 173 poorest countries in the world. According to Zorbas (2004:37), this implies that, “In a small, land-locked, primarily rural country such as Rwanda, ranked 162nd out of 173 countries in the UNDP’s Human Development Index, government figures indicate that 60% of the population live on less than a dollar a day. Thus, poverty reduction is key part of the answer to this widowed Rwandan woman’s question: ‘How can I forgive, when my livelihood was destroyed and I cannot even pay for the schooling of my children.’” This woman’s reaction is indicative of the state of approximately 90 per cent of the population in Rwanda whose main source of livelihood depends on farming.

Moreover, Josh Rubenstein, the Executive Director of Amnesty International at Northeast US office in Summerville, laments the fact that “Ten years after the genocide Rwanda is pitifully poor, ranking 152 out of 162 nations on the United Nations Human Development Index” (The Boston Phoenix.Com, 2005:3). He goes on to explain that despite some visible improvements owing to the grants obtained from international donor agents, “90 per cent of people still survive on subsistence farming in Rwanda” (p.3). On the other hand, Desmond Tutu (2000:274) has also recognized and acknowledged the

complex nature of the economic situation and the plight of the African people in South Africa when he states, “For unless houses replace the hovels and shacks in which most blacks live, unless blacks gain access to clean water, electricity, affordable health care, decent education, good jobs, and a safe environment – things which the majority of whites have taken for granted for so long – we can just as well kiss reconciliation goodbye.” If this kind of a situation still prevails in a democratic South Africa that brought an end to apartheid crime against humanity, one can only begin to grasp the complex nature of the reconstruction and reconciliation programs in Rwanda. For this reason, one has to concede that so long as the rural community is isolated and feels alienated then, it becomes very difficult to talk positively about reconstruction and reconciliation. And if there is a country that has needed the concerted efforts from the international and African communities as well as the “marshal plan” of the magnitude that transformed Japan and Europe after the Second World War, that country is Rwanda. If there a country that has needed moral, spiritual, economic, social and political uplifting that would transform the lives of its people, that country is Rwanda. But then the argument is that Rwanda is, after all, an African country.

In essence therefore, and from the above perspective, reconstruction and reconciliation programs must, out of necessity, address aggressively issues such as “economic development, equality, participation, tolerance, human rights and the rule of law” in order to bring some tangible transformation of the lives of those who have been affected by the conflict (Zorbas 2004:38; see also Peter Uvin 1998). The benefits of the aid offered by international donor agents, humanitarian assistance programs and NGOs for the reconstruction and reconciliation in a post conflict society often become controversial, especially when questions are asked about the categories of people who are in partnership with the various groups of international aid donors. In this connection and particularly in relation to the reconstruction and reconciliation programs in Rwanda, one has to recognize the fact that women are in reality engaged in reconstruction and reconciliation long before the conflict erupts, during the conflict and, therefore, most certainly important in the process after the conflict. It is therefore important to point out that in regards to the reconstruction and reconciliation programs, the interest of women must be considered paramount because of their resiliency in facing whatever challenges their lives.

In 1995 Desmond Tutu visited the village of Ntarama, just a few kilometers from Rwandan capital, Kigali. It is in this village where the Tutsi had been killed in a church. According to Tutu, “The new government had not removed the corpses, so that the church was like a mortuary, with bodies lying as they had fallen the year before during the massacre. The stench was overpowering. Outside the church building was a collection of skulls of some of those who had been brutally done to death-some of the skulls still had *pangas* (machetes) and daggers embedded in them. I tried to pray. Instead I broke down and wept” (Tutu 2000:258). But despite this heart rending experience for Desmond Tutu, he was so much humbled when he visited the Nelson Mandela Peace Village, a new settlement that had been built through the efforts of women themselves. The women at the village were all orphans, widows and refugees who had come together to try to forget their ethnic origins in an effort to live together in peace and build a new Rwanda, (Janice McDonald CNN NEWSROOM 2001:1). While visiting the village, Tutu spoke to the

women leaders. What impressed him most was the strength of these women and he reports his encounter and observations:

They (women) said, 'We must mourn and weep for the dead. But life must also go on, we can't go on weeping.' How wonderfully impressive, how indomitable. Over at Ntarama, we might say, there was Calvary, death and crucifixion. Here in the Nelson Mandela Village was Resurrection, new life, new beginning, new hope. Once more it was noteworthy to see how women have this remarkable resilience and an instinct for nurturing life (p.258).

While articulating the overwhelming obstacles that face the whole process of reconstruction and reconciliation, Heather Hamilton (2000:1), explains:

The challenge of reconstruction of the physical and social structure of Rwanda seems like an overwhelming task to most observers. The country is economically ravaged and socially divided..... Huge refugee flows of millions of people and a continuing insurgency in the northwest have only increased the difficulty of the task of reconstruction. The international humanitarian community has been engaged in Rwanda, for better or for worse, from the first days after the end of the genocide. Academic and journalistic analyses of the conflict and reconstruction have been published and dissected, yet somehow in the midst of all the humanitarian assistance and debate, the women of Rwanda generally have been treated as just one of many demographic groups vying for attention."

Addressing post-conflict Rwanda through the lenses of women provides us with the opportunity to appreciate their incredible sense of leadership that gives hope to their families and the people of Rwanda as doctors across their country's landscape. In Rwanda, women who "watched helplessly as their husbands, fathers, mothers, sisters, brothers, friends and even children were cut down with machetes" have been able to "pick up the pieces of their broken lives" and their broken country and "begin a process of rebuilding" (Jodi Enda 2003:1). Women have demonstrated an amazing strength and courage in the midst of the national tragedy and, it is that inner strength that enables them to survive even the most horrific conditions in which they find themselves. Jodi Enda has pointed out that some analysts have indicated that the "war-torn" Iraq and Afghanistan would be wise to follow Rwanda's lead and make women full partners as they rebuild their war-torn civil societies (p.1).

Efforts at Reconstruction and Reconciliation in Post-Conflict Rwanda

In concerted efforts to restore peace in Rwanda, the government of National Unity was established and it came into existence as a result of the survivors' desire to transcend the negative images that had led to the genocide. From the time of its inception in 1999 the National Unity and Reconciliation Commission (NURC) paid particular attention to issues pertaining to Rwandans, the civil society, efforts to bring the Rwandans of all walks of life together and the challenges posed by the prevailing poverty in the country.

In order to ensure national cohesion, the government of national unity embarked on a number of strategies:

- Ensuring democratic governance: actions to ensure democratic governance since 1994 have included the passing of the genocide law to challenge the impunity which characterized acts of violence in Rwanda for three decades before 1994; adherence to the Arusha Accords of 1993 to guide the composition of the government of national unity and national assembly.
- Public service reforms to enhance transparency, efficiency and effectiveness in public service delivery.
- Promoting peace, security and unity through reconciliation programs.
- Creation of a community police force to enhance security at the local levels.
- Promoting national dialogue on the country's needs and aspirations through forums.
- Initiation of the decentralized process facilitation the devolution of administrative responsibilities and supportive to local government units, and consolidation of the structure of local governments.
- Provision of social and physical infrastructure in the local administrative units is substantially supported by direct contribution from local communities, a visible evidence of the popularity of representative local government.
- Cooperation with the international agencies in monitoring human rights standards and reconstruction. Above all, in a remarkably short time, Rwanda has succeeded in rebuilding a functioning civil society; in particular, strong women's associations, and a free press, and employers and workers associations (ACBF Board of Governors, The Hague 2004:42).

The same source goes on to explain that "In order to demonstrate its resolve for participatory democracy and inclusiveness, the RPF-led government supported the creation of a powerful parliament and a weakened presidency. Moreover, in its efforts to increase the representation of women, for example, the government split in 1999 the Ministry of Gender, Family and Social Affairs into the Ministry of Family and Social Affairs and the Ministry of Gender and the Promotion of Women. The latter Ministry was charged with the responsibility of developing projects to reform all laws discriminating against women, and of promoting women's education and training."

The National Unity and Reconciliation Commission undertook aggressive measures to organize meetings for the various groups of people in the country. Other measures included workshops and conferences whose major themes specifically addressed concerns for National Unity and Reconciliation. These attempts by the Rwandan government to deal with the post conflict crisis culminated into the organization of various national summits where Rwandans of all levels of society, including representatives from Rwanda's Diaspora community, were present.

The NURC also organized workshops which targeted different segments of the population. The main objective was to give an opportunity for these individuals to

undergo “civic re-education’ or ‘solidarity’ camp – the *ingandos*. Demobilized soldiers (from the national army as well as from the ex-FAR) *Interahmwe* and other groups that” had “been repatriated to Rwanda mostly from Eastern Congo provisionally released prisoners, and others” were “required to stay at an *ingando* from 6-to-8 weeks (Eugenia Zorbas 2004:38). These individuals were offered courses covering among other areas, “their socio-economic reintegration into the society” (Zorbas p. 38). This became a preparatory stage through which an individual could begin to make the journey back to the real world, to the new Rwandan civil society after the ravages of the war period. It also formed part of the most important initiatives by the Rwandan government in its attempt to rehabilitate and enhance the spirit of National Unity and Reconciliation among its citizens.

The National Unity and Reconciliation Commission and Gender Perspective

When the Rwandan government took a bold step towards the establishment of government of national unity, it recognized women as a formidable force within the Rwandan society. Women had been both the providers for the two sides of the conflict. They took care of the sick, the wounded, the elders, the youth and the children. Even those who went on a killing spree returned home to be fed by women as well as those in the refugee camps. Therefore, in an effort to increase the representation of women, for example, in 1999 the government split the Ministry of Gender, Family and Social Affairs into the Ministry of Family and Social Affairs and the Ministry of Gender and Promotion of Women. The latter Ministry was charged with the responsibility of developing projects that would see to it that all laws that discriminated against women were reformed. It was also given the responsibility of promoting the education and training of women. Thus, it is not surprising that today women in Rwanda constitute 48.8% of the members in the Lower House in the Rwandan parliament.

The constitution of Rwanda had allocated 30% of the seats in Rwandan parliament to the women. Indeed with the elections of the year 2003 a large number of women were elected to that August house. Therefore women garnered six (6) out of the twenty (20) seats in the Senate. On the other hand, in the Lower House which comprises a total of eighty (80) seats, women were able to garner thirty-nine (39) seats. The Rwandan women, in actual fact, got more votes than what was expected and it even surprised their male counterparts.

According to Jodi Enda (2003:3) “Rwanda’s new constitution set aside 24 of 80 seats in the chamber of Deputies, the Lower House of Parliament, for women. Following October elections in which they competed against men to win 15 additional seats, 39 women took their places in the chamber. They now hold 49% of these seats, a greater proportion than in any other parliament worldwide, according to a tally by the Geneva-based Inter-Parliamentary Union, which represent 138 parliaments.” The union in its report had indicated that as a result of the 2003 elections of women to Parliament, Rwanda had “come closest to reaching parity between men and women of national parliament and therefore replacing long-time champion Sweden.” In this regard the Rwandan constitution had paid particular attention to issues of gender disparity and during its making came up with a gender-sensitive constitution. It was, indeed, a positive step towards the future of the country on the empowerment of Rwandan women.

The Rwandan tragedy was a wake-up call for the women as many of them took up new professions just to keep the country running. Women constituted an overwhelming majority in the aftermath of the conflict. Lacey (2005:2) reports, "At the end of the ethnic warfare of the 1990s, women greatly outnumbered men." Some of the existing estimates have put it at "the ration 7 to 1" and this is because of "wanton killing of so many men and the escape of so many others involved in the carnage. During the rebuilding of the country, the women's anguished voices were difficult not to hear, and they became what was seen as powerful and credible force for reconciliation" (p.2).

Some of the prominent women in Rwandan civil society include, Donnah Kamashazi, who is the representative in Rwanda for the United Nations Development Fund for Women. Others include: the Chief of Justice of the Supreme Court, the Head of National Unity and Reconciliation Commission, Deputy Police Chief, and those who hold ministerial posts in the government (Lacey 2003:2). Like any other world community gender imbalance is still a major issues in much of the African continent, nevertheless, when it comes to the Parliamentary representation, Rwanda and South Africa as well as Mozambique had deliberately shown a great stride towards political empowerment of women (Ayot, 2005). This was just the foundation, the beginning and one is not suggesting here that the problems in Rwanda are already solved just because of the presence of women in that august house.

One of the major achievements on the part of women in Rwanda has to do with the land issues where women and girls had been excluded from inheriting land. According to the July 19, 2000 report by the Secretary General to the General Assembly Security Council, under Rwandan legal system, girls could not inherit land. But as a result of "the visit to Rwanda in February of 1999, and building on the earlier work of several non-governmental organizations and United Nations agencies, the special Representative for Children and Armed conflict engaged in a dialogue with the government, (of Rwanda), urging them to introduce legislation that would allow girls to inherit farms and other properties." These consultative meetings led to the enactment of legislation in November 1999 by the Government of Rwanda which embodied among others, the rights of girls to inherit land and other properties (pp.16-17).

The other area of concern that has received significant attention of the international community is the issue of rape as it is perpetuated against girls and women. The report by the Secretary General laments the plight of the girl child and women who become targeted during wards of genocidal proportion. Rape is used as a weapon to dehumanize not only the victims but also to show the brute force and power over the victim and by extension over the family members, the village, the clan and the entire community. It is the highest level of humiliation and deprivation of one's own humanity. The Secretary General report states, "UNICEF data indicated that, during the decade between 1986 and 1996, armed conflicts killed 2 million children, injured 6 million, traumatized over 10 million and left 1 million orphans". "Beyond these numbers are haunting images from place to place of adolescents victims of rape as well as women, which has become as much a weapon of warfare as bullets and machetes, of child soldiers

barely the height of the automatic weapons they carry, and children separated from their families in conditions of extreme deprivation. Armed conflicts also increasingly serve as vectors for HIV/AIDS pandemic, which follows closely on the heel of armed troops in the corridors of conflict “(pp. 1-2). It was these disturbing and chilling accounts of the plight of the girl child and women that led to the 1998 Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court which defined rape and sexual slavery “As both war crimes and crimes against humanity” (p.3; see also Berkeley 2001).

The Secretary-General report further states that, “.... The façade of impunity for perpetrators of sexual violence against children (and women) in wartime is finally crumbling.” Subsequently International Tribunals for the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda “have obtained several convictions for sexual violence and rape. A recent case tried by the Tribunal for Rwanda resulted in a conviction for genocide and crime against humanity for acts that included rape of a very young girl. As noted above, particularly grave forms of sexual violence, including rape, sexual slavery and enforced prostitution, constitute war crimes within the jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court. Gender issues are being addressed throughout the procedures that will govern the court largely owing to the efforts of non-governmental organizations such as the Women’s Gender Justice Caucus supported by UNIFEM” (p. 17). While the foregoing steps are impressive in their attempts to address gender and violence against the girl child and women, nevertheless, in the Darfur area of Western Sudan, girls and women have been disproportionately violated and raped right before the eyes of various international communities.

It is worth noting that Pauline Nyiramasuhukon, who was the minister for Family and Women’s Affairs during the Habyariamana regime, has been charged at the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda sitting in Arusha, Tanzania for a crime against humanity. She is charged of having committed crimes against humanity. Her son has been charged of the rape of Tutsi women, which she failed to stop in her capacity as the Minister in charge of family and women’s affairs. While the foregoing steps are, indeed impressive in their attempts to address gender and violent conflicts, it is noted however, that the international humanitarian laws have no means of enforcing these steps. The situation in Western Sudan, the Darfur area has been the scene where women have been disproportionately violated and raped right before the eyes of the various international humanitarian agencies.

The Role of Women in Post Conflict Rwanda: Aloisea Inyumba

There was a wide range of issues that posed a challenge to the post conflict Rwandan society. Among them were disarmament, demobilization, reintegration, reunification of people and children who had been separated from each other but who became survivors, resettlement of families, and internally displaced persons as well as those who had been traumatized by the war. The physical and psychological wounds remained deep and it is these types of situations that Aloisea Inyumba faced when she embarked on a mission to bring about reconciliation among the grassroots level.

In the aftermath of the 1994 genocide Aloisea Inyumba became the minister for Gender and Social Affairs, but with the establishment of the National Unity and

Reconciliation Commission, she served in her capacity as the executive secretary of NURC. The major focus of the National Unity and Reconciliation Commission included initiating consultations throughout the country, while placing emphasis on the need for all Rwandans to develop the spirit of national corporation and coexistence. The Commission paid particular attention to the challenging issues in regard to common history for all Rwandans, removal of the myths and confronting bigotry in all its forms, monitoring all government progressions with a view to determining the impact of the programs on peace, reconciliation and national unity (Prendergast and Smock 1999:8). The National Unity and Reconciliation Commission specifically recognized the challenge posed by “poor justice, governance, and leadership and poverty as the major obstacle to national unity” (ACBF Board of Governors, The Hague 2004:42).

As Inyumba became actively involved in the work of the National Unity and Reconciliation Commission, her immediate concern was to embark on the arrangements for the “burials and funerals” as well as commemorations.” She also took up the responsibility of providing relief to survivors of the genocide and assistance to the Rwandan refugees who were returning to their country. The task was enormous but Inyumba was equally aware of the social dislocation that existed between the Twa, the Hutu and the Tutsi. Therefore she began to sow seeds that would gradually bring the Twa, Hutu and Tutsi together to talk about the past with a view to coming to the some form of forgiveness and reconciliation.

As the task of heading the National Unity and Reconciliation Commission fell upon Inyumba, six years later she was quick to interject, “If you look at where we’ve been and where we are today, there is a big sign of hope” (Ciabattari 2000:1). Inyumba has a vivid recollection of what happened in 1994 and she recalls, “We saw mothers (forced into) killing their own children, husbands killing wives, children killing parents. It was madness (Caibattari 2000:1). But as she became the head of Rwanda’s National Unity and Reconciliation Commission, she embarked on the road to rebuild the rough edges of the broken lives of the survivors of the tragedy. Women realized very quickly that this was not the issue of the victors and vanquished as both survivors of the tragedy faced the same political, economic and social conditions. And the most challenging aspect was how to repair or rebuild the social relations and social structures of the country that had been totally destroyed.

Thus, soon after the RPF took the country Inyumba became the only woman member of the executive committee of RPF which comprised ten members. She was also the minister for Finance. But in her capacity as the minister for Family and Social Affairs, Inyumba faced the horror of the genocide and buried the multitudes of the bodies of those killed during the conflict. It was also her responsibility to bring back the refugees, both Hutu and Tutsi who had had to flee the country. She recognized the enormity of this destruction and she remarked “the level of destruction, of hatred, of badness was a new thing for us” (p.2). She had lost two brothers and took their two children under her own custody. “The killers specifically targeted Tutsi women who were raped, tortured, mutilated and killed... many women were raped by men who knew they were HIV-positive and sadistically transmitted the virus to Tutsi women and their families” (p.2). The National Population Office estimates that most of the over twelve year old surviving girls became victims of rape bringing into the Rwandan society

approximately between 2,000 and 5,000 children who are often referred to as “children of hate” (p.2; see also Ayot 2003). Members of the militia equally subjected women and girls to sexual slavery.

The other category of women with whom Inyumba had to deal was the more than 5,000 women whose husbands had been killed during the genocide. Inyumba noted that the problem facing women were a national catastrophe and that immediate steps had to be taken. As a result, she was able to obtain some funding from the United Nations High Commission for Refugees as well as from the United States Department. With this funding Inyumba inaugurated the first step towards sensitization and mobilization of Rwandans. Therefore, the Rwanda Women’s Initiative came into existence. Its major objective was to establish a network that would bring together the Hutu, Tutsi and Twa women so that they could start a dialogue with each other. Inyumba considered this to be the most important step towards reconciliation. It was also an aspect that would eventually lead to the realization of women’s effort towards truthfulness and forgiveness.

In her determining to reach out to the various groups in Rwandans, especially women from the Twa, Hutu and Tutsi communities, Inyumba thought of a meaningful way of bringing them together and this is how she went about it: “I organized week-long workshops for reconciliation. At first sessions the women sat in separate corners, but they had to share mats, soap and food. Finally they had to acknowledge that they needed each other” (Ciabattari 2000:3). This was a slow process of empowerment as women began to realize that they faced the same multiple problems in their society and that they needed to multiply their efforts if they were to survive in this war-torn Rwandan society. Inyumba explains further that, “By the end of the week, Hutu and Tutsi women finally opened up to the possibility of working to solve their common problems” (p. 3).

The fact that these women had to share mats, soap and food did not in any way mean that they had never possessed these things or that they had never enjoyed the comfort of sleeping on a warm and comfortable bed. It was a testimony revealing that when human beings have been reduced to the bare minimal, it does not matter whether one had been a member of the privileged class or not. The human tragedy had struck and the world had broken them, but the only thing these women, (the Hutu, Tutsi and Twa) had in common was the fact that they were all survivors. It was as if these women had been hearing and listening to the voices from the dead: the voices of the girls who were mercilessly killed because when asked to separate, Hutu from Tutsi, they simply said over here we are all Rwandans. The stand that these girls took is, in reality, the embodiment of the spirit of national unity for all surviving Rwandans and, to a larger extent, a great lesson for the African people everywhere in the continent. For where did these young innocent girls get the courage to stand unified in the face of death, something that has eluded the African people for so long? Philip Gourevitch (1998: 352-353) sees the hope for unity, forgiveness, reconciliation and reconstruction in Rwanda through the tragedy of these young girls when he states:

On April 30, 1997- almost a year ago as I write-Rwandan television showed footage of a man who confessed to having been among a party of *ge’nocidaires* who had killed seventeen schoolgirls and a sixty-two-year old Belgium nun at a boarding school in Gisenyi two nights earlier. It was the second such attack on a

school in a month; the first time, sixteen students were killed and twenty injured in Kibuye. The prisoner on television explained that the massacre was part of a Hutu Power 'liberation' campaign. His band of a hundred fifty militants was composed largely of ex-FAR and *Interwahamwe*. During the attack on the school in Gisenyi, as in the earlier attack on the school in Kibuye, the students, teenage girls who had been roused from their sleep, were ordered to separate themselves-Hutu from Tutsi. But the students had refused. At both schools, the girls said they were simply Rwandans, so they were beaten and shot indiscriminately.

The art of sharing the mat reminded these women that at one point in time, we slept on the animal skin spread on the floor, and then we graduated to sleep on the mat, also spread on the floor, and finally, came the luxury and comfort of sleeping on the beds. Time had moved backward and not forward for these women and it was now up to them alone, at that particular moment in time, to build hope for the future and, indeed, to build hope for the future generation as a way of honoring the memory of these girls and the many other Rwandans who died fighting for a democratic Rwandan society. And in a more practical and symbolic terms, this was a rude reawakening, coming to terms with the realities of the utter destruction of the Rwandan society; the destruction of its political, economic and social infrastructure.

Thus, one of the major problems that came up during the workshops centered on the plight of the Rwandan orphans. The Secretary General's report of July 19, 2000 indicated that at the end of the genocide in Rwanda, there were approximately 45,000 households that were headed by children, but there were also over one hundred orphanages with approximately a "half a million orphans." From her own observation Inyumba stated, "We had half a million orphans in 100 orphanages. Women had lost children, children had lost mothers. We did a national campaign. We said, 'every home a child, every child a home.' Women went to the orphanages and took children home. Hutu and Tutsi women have all taken children, regardless of ethnic background. It was the first step in the reconciliation." (Ciabattari 2000:3).

The impact of this coming together of Rwandan women was felt throughout the country and some of the orphanages were closed. And even though some of the orphans and those children who have been abandoned still remain helpless in Rwanda, nevertheless, women had proved that they are indeed, agents of reconciliation as they recognized their common problems and were able to transcend the negative images that had driven people to take up arms against each other. Through their own self actualization and empowerment, women had recognized that they had been called upon to become not only mothers to the orphans but also heads of households. Moreover, women became actively involved in such activities as building, painting, driving, gaining access to small businesses and gaining "access to banks – ikegega – a store house for seeds." Women had become not only resilient but also a formidable force in the Rwandan society. They were thus determined and decided to embrace hope rather than despair.

In collaboration with Ambassador Swanee Hunt, the Founder of Women Waging Peace, Inyumba and two other Rwandan women became part of the team that worked hard to bring about a possible resolution to the crisis in the Great Lakes region, particularly regarding the challenges facing the Democratic Republic of Congo. Such a

team would have remained predominantly male oriented since it is men who wage war, and it is they who negotiate the peace treaties. Rwandan women have made their mark as ministers of justice, agriculture, the National Development Bank and, of course, Inyumba's own work with the National Unity and Reconciliation Committee (p.4).

Inyumba believes that the future of Rwanda as a stable and democratic civil society depends very much on the reconciliation measures undertaken jointly by the Rwandans and their government. And women have recognized that their "biggest challenge today is to talk about the way forward. We must make sure another generation does not suffer. We have suffered too much" Inyumba concluded (p.4). Aloisea Inyumba is currently the governor of Kigali – Ngali Province in Rwanda. She is therefore "responsible for overall management of the province, as well as policy coordination and implementation at this crucial moment in her nation's history." (Women Waging Peace, A Program of Hunt Alternatives Fund (p.1).

Connie Buiza and Rose Kabuye

Like Inyumba, other Rwandan women were determined to make a difference in their country and they became actively involved in concerted efforts to transform their society embracing, as it were, the spirit of national unity, reconciliation, reconstruction and the desire to establish a democratic government in Rwanda. Among these is Connie Sekamana Buiza. Buiza had been part of the team that had negotiated the 1993 Arusha Peace Accords. As a member of Rwandan Parliament, she also became the vice chair of the Forum for Women Parliamentarians whose major objective was to oversee the reconstruction and rebuilding of Rwanda. In this connection, Buiza fully participated in the reconstruction programs that had been initiated by the United Nations Development Programmes (UNDP). At the same time she conducted "sensitization sessions following the passage of the new national constitution in May 2003" (Women Waging Peace, A Program of Hunt Alternative Fund, 2004:1).

Another contributor on women's front was Rose Kabuye became the chair of the Political and Judiciary Commission as well as "a member of the Executive Board of Rwandan Leadership Conference, a domestic spin off of Women as Partners for Peace in Africa." This program was initiated by the US State Department. It brought together African women from Angola, Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda, South Africa, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe to discuss issues pertaining to "peace and regional stability" (p.2).

Kabuye became the first Mayor of Kigali immediately after the 1994 genocide. She also served as a member of the Rwandan National Assembly where she worked very closely with the Security and Defence Committee, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, Army Headquarters and the Police (p.2). Rose Kabuye reflects on the impact of the colonial legacy, lamenting the historical developments that have led to the unprecedented "violence and ethnic tension and conflict" in the African continent. But like the other Rwandan women, Kabuye takes a positive approach towards the future of her country. In her capacity as Lieutenant Colonel, Kabuye is presently the chief of protocol for Rwanda in the office of the President.

Soline Nyirahabimana, Domtilla Mukataganzwa, and Edda Mukabagwiza

On matters that pertain to legal issues, women have equally been prominent. Two women stand out and these are: Soline Nyirahabimana and Domtilla Mukataganzwa. Nyirahabimana was previously a member of the National Rwandan Commission for Human Rights. She made several presentations at the national as well as the international level. Back in Rwanda, she offered a number of training courses on conflict transformation, prevention and management along with “women’s rights and human rights” (p.2). Nyirahabimana also became the legal advisor of the President as well as “the director of legal, legislative, and constitutional affairs. She counsels President Kagame on ramifications of potential laws and additions to constitution, paying particular attention to those laws which related to peace, human rights, and women’s rights”(p.2). Aware of the complex nature of the centrality of reconciliation as well as the desire to promote social cohesion in their society, there is no doubt that Rwandan women have played and continue to play crucial role in the reconstruction and reconciliation in their country.

Desmond Tutu has stressed the importance of forgiveness and reconciliation making reference to his own experience with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa. He posits that “without forgiveness there really is no future.” He goes on to explain further that, “It is crucial, when a relationship has been damaged or when a potential relationship has been made impossible, that the perpetrator should acknowledge the truth and be ready to apologize. It helps the process of forgiveness and reconciliation immensely” (Tutu 2000:269). In this connection Mary Kimani (2005:2) looks at the process of forgiveness and reconciliation as demonstrated by Genevieve Uwamariya, a catholic nun in Rwanda. During the genocide, all of Genevieve’s family members were exterminated. However, by 1998 Genevieve embarked on what might have seemed to be a formidable and unthinkable task. She formulated a project that would eventually bring together a total of 400 killers, one of whom was the man who killed her own father.

The killers held meetings and talked to their victims’ family members about their roles in the genocide. Reflecting on her own father’s killer, Genevieve explains, “When he asked to see me, I was unsure. But I said to myself, ‘I need to be an example. I can not tell people to do this if I can not do it myself.’ We have spoken; he told me what he did. He had no reason. I have forgiven him. It is hard, but I forgave” (ibid.p.2). As a result of this effort of Genevieve, the people she brought together have turned their lives around and are now helping with reconstruction of the homes of the survivors of the conflict and are also involved in reconciliation programs.

But while such efforts have, indeed, been commendable and they augur well with aspirations of the National Unity and Reconciliation Commission, there still remains one of the most challenging and daunting questions that touch on the “Rwandan process” that “is based on a direct concern for international humanitarian consideration and the issue of bringing the perpetrators of genocide to justice” (Erasmus and Fourier 1997:2). Erasmus and Fourier have pointed out that the “implications” of the internationalization of justice “for national reconciliation have not been properly addressed” (p.2). They further expand on what they consider to be the two prominent “pillars of the broader process” which are “justice and the reconstruction of the Rwandan society” and these are indeed “directly interrelated. The latter- national reconstruction and reconciliation – is mentioned, but

does not form part of the mandate of the ICTR” (p.2). Thus, the question as to whether internationalization of justice and programs can adequately bring about a meaningful reconciliation and reconstruction in Rwanda still lingers on. To this extent, it would be more appropriate to look at the role played by Domitilla Mukantaganzwa and Edda Mukabagwiza in relation to the Gacaca as a traditional form of justice in Rwanda.

Information obtained from the Interim Report on research on Gacaca jurisdictions and its preparations (July- December 2001:31), indicates that the judges who would eventually become involved in the Gacaca courts process, were elected and that both male and female members of all social classes freely participated in the elections of these judges. During the elections period the President of Rwanda urged the people from all walks of life to come out and participate in the elections without any fear of discrimination and regardless of gender difference. The report asserts:

In his address to the nation, President Paul Kagame called on all Rwandans to elect, without discrimination, people who are honest, principled and hardworking and he asked specifically the women to participate fully in the Gacaca courts. These courts should establish the truth about what happened, to expedite the backlog of the Genocide, to eradicate the culture of impunity and to consolidate the unity of the people. He also made an appeal to guard against what may lead to disagreements or divisions arising from the elections (p.31).

As a traditional form of justice, the Gacaca courts system was conceived as a process or an instrument for reconciliation and justice. And Zorbas (2004:31) maintains that the Gacaca courts system that was established in 2002 was “Rwanda’s attempt at striking the balance between justice and healing, vengeance and forgiveness.” Desmond Tutu (2000: 54-55), on the other hand, gives an elaborate description of such an approach to justice when he states:

We contend that there is another kind of justice, restorative justice, which was characteristic of traditional African jurisprudence. Here the central concern is not retribution or punishment. In the spirit of *ubuntu*, the central concern is the healing of the breaches, the redressing of imbalances, the restoration of broken relationships, a seeking to rehabilitate the victim and the perpetrator, who should be given the opportunity to be reintegrated into the community he has injured by his offence. This is a far more personal approach, regarding the offence as something that happened to persons and whose consequence is a rupture in relationships. Thus we would claim that justice, restorative justice, is being served when efforts are being made to work for healing, for forgiving, and for reconciliation.

It is the aspect of the characteristic of its Africanness in terms of jurisprudence that propelled the Rwandans to evoke the spirit of restorative justice. Thus the Gacaca courts system was established also as an attempt to try to resolve the congestion in Rwandan prisons in the aftermath of the 1994 genocide. The pilot phase began in 2002 and this was meant to assess the workability of this traditional approach to restorative justice. The responsibility of the Gacaca system fell upon Edda Mukabagwiza in her capacity as the country’s Chief Justice (See Arthur Asiimwe 2005:1). Mukabagwiza’s first step was to

visit all prisons and prisoners in Rwanda. Thereafter, several panels were established in 751 pilot Gacaca courts whose responsibility was to question some of the suspects from 2003 to 2004. Mukabagwiza explains, “Under the Gacaca system, suspects who confess and plead guilty have their sentence reduced. The courts are meant to help reduce the huge backlog of suspects awaiting trial in conventional courts, estimated at 80,000” (UN Integrated Regional Information Networks News, Kigali 2005:1).

Mukabagwiza further stated that there were other investigations that had been mounted, and this process would continue for sometime as they were expected to cover 8,262 pilot courts. Once the process of investigation was done, the judges would be able to categorize those who were involved in the genocide. This is a tedious process that will take time, but she hoped that the proceedings would begin by at least early 2006.

On the other hand, Domitilla Mukantanzwa, the Executive Secretary for the Gacaca courts explains that “up to one million Rwandans and eighth of the population – could be tried under the Gacaca system” (p.1). She was expecting that the trials would begin in the month of February 2005 and this would set pace for a continuous process up to 2006 (Asiimwe 2005:1). According to Mukantanzwa, at the beginning the investigations had only been confined to areas where pilot trials had been held, but during this second phase “the exercise will be rolled out to all parts of the country. We hope all this should be over by year end to have full trial commence (in 2006)” (Asiimwe 2005:1). The major focus of the Gacaca courts would be mainly “confessions and apology.” The intention of this national approach to issues of justice would be “to ease the way to national reconciliation” (p.2). The Gacaca courts system contrasts interestingly with the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, sitting in Arusha, Tanzania that has indicted 82, convicted 23 and acquitted 3 in its ten years of operation.

It is beyond the scope of this paper to go into the debates and critiques about the Gacaca courts system (see Kenneth Roth and Alison DesForges, (Boston Review); Helena Cobban, (Boston Review). But what is important is that the Gacaca might possibly help the people of Rwanda to be engaged in the process of talking to each other about what happened in those dark valleys of death in Rwanda. Secondly it is a home grown, arising and emanating from an attempt by Rwandans themselves to find solution to the challenges that face them. And what is significant is that the Rwandans are doing something regardless of its merits and demerits. It would be more noble a task to assist them so that if the system fails to achieve its goal, the people of Rwanda would say, “we tried and failed but we did something that is uniquely Rwandan.” And Zorbas (2004:37) concludes:

Despite what may seem like insurmountable problems, *gacaca* presently represents the most suitable and only workable solution for bringing those responsible for atrocities to trial promptly, and ending the legacy of impunity. Moreover, prisoners who were consulted on *gacaca* were favourable to a system that would help speed up their hearings. Genocide survivors, though some remain apprehensive, want to see perpetrators punished, even if their prison sentence is dramatically reduced.

It is interesting to note that by the year 2002 there were three component parts of the prosecutorial systems that converged as Rwandans sought resolution to issues

surrounding reconstruction, reconciliation and justice. There was the international humanitarian law which was encapsulated into the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda in Arusha, the national courts and Gacaca courts systems within the Rwandan society. The major challenge was how to coordinate and balance these well intentioned legal systems for the sole purpose of ensuring adequate and meaningful reconstruction and reconciliation, justice and democracy in a society that had gone through traumatic events whose impact on the memory of the survivors (Hutu, Tutsi and Twa) was still so very fresh.

The chief prosecutor at the Arusha tribunal, Carla Del Ponte, a Swiss national had succeeded the Canadian Louise Arbour in 1999. While heading the Arusha Tribunal, she “secretly launched what she called ‘Special Investigations’ against the 1994 activities of the mainly Tutsi Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) as it fought to overthrow the Hutu-led government that carried out the genocide” (Edwards2003:1). In the midst of all this there developed a misunderstanding and controversy between the chief prosecutor and the Rwandan government. The unfolding events gradually led to her removal from the Arusha Tribunal in August 2003. She was quick to accuse the United Nations for having given into the “pressures from Paul Kagame,” maintaining that he had “objected to her investigations of members of his political organization” (ibid. p.1). She also accused Britain and the US for having supported her removal because the two countries are “both allies of the Tutsi-led government of Paul Kagame in Kigali, Rwanda’s capital” (Carroll 2005:1). In the same article Carroll reports a related stand taken by Professor Filip Reyntjens, “a Belgian historian and expert witness on the genocide” who in a letter written in January 2005 threatened to “stop cooperating with the Tribunal because no Tutsi from the Rwandan Patriotic Front rebel army had been indicted” (ibid.p.1).

The removal of Carla Del Ponte elicited divergence of opinion both nationally and internationally. But it is worth pointing out that during this period, the Arusha Tribunal was facing real tests and challenges. And whereas the investigations of the crimes against humanity committed by RPF members are in order, and indeed, warrant being undertaken, and the chief prosecutor’s actions may have been well intentioned and commendable, nevertheless, Del Ponte already had some individuals who had been indicted and others whose hearing should have proceeded with greater speed.

The Norwegian Helsinki Committee Report II/2002 contained the following information: “As of August 2002 the Arusha Tribunal has indicted nine persons. Eight have been convicted, of whom three are on the basis of personal confessions, while one has been acquitted. Another 17 are now on trial in the Tribunal in cases that run parallel in the three Tribunal chambers with sentence at the end of next year. Another 30 or so prominent accused are in custody pending trial” while the Tribunal’s “2002 budget is nearly doubled to 192 million dollars” (Norwegian Helsinki Committee 2002:23). It would have been more appropriate for Del Ponte to complete phase one of the trials and then embark on her investigations of the RPF members which could have been done discreetly rather than “secretly.” Therefore, even if the ultimate intention of the chief prosecutor was to see to it that justice was seen to be done, those who were already awaiting trial were equally Rwandans and equally Hutu who deserved speedy and fair trial.

In an article entitled “the International Tribunal for Rwanda: Time for Pragmatism,” which appeared just a month after the removal of Del Ponte, the International Crisis Group asserted that the Arusha Tribunal had already “charged 82 persons with genocide. Quite simply, the ICTR does not have the capacity to deal with anymore cases. More importantly, the main suspected perpetrators had already been indicted. The departure of Carla Del Ponte as prosecutor --- does not change the court’s priority. It needs to complete the outstanding cases and re-launch its inquiries into the war crimes presumed to have been committed by RPA...” (September 26, 2003:1).

According to Binaifer Nowrojee, a researcher at the Harvard University’s Human Rights Centre, who has diligently carried out studies about the Arusha Tribunal and its performance, there was a petition from 60 NGOs in Rwanda which asked the Security Council to relieve Del Ponte of her duties in Arusha for her failure “to prosecute rape cases with warranted diligence.” The NGOs charged that there had “been a decline in the number of new indictments that contain sexual violence charges” during Del Ponte’s tenure in Arusha (Kelly 2003:2). On the other hand, the Rwandan genocide survivors had even suggested that the Security Council ought to consider appointing someone who understands African culture as the chief prosecutor at the Arusha Tribunal.

Thus, by sidelining the immediate problems at the Arusha Tribunal, Del Ponte undermined the credibility of the ICTR. Moreover, the Norwegian Helsinki Committee on Rwanda submitted in its report that Carla Del Ponte had actually admitted that she had been pressurized by certain “states to indict RPF members.” It is therefore reasonable to infer here that the conflict between the chief prosecutor of the Arusha Tribunal and the government of Rwanda hampered rather than enhance the attempt to bring justice, democracy and reconciliation in the country. If anything, it helped to build up the recidivist pressures both internally and internationally that could very well lead to recurrence of conflict, undermining, as it were, the aspirations of the government of national unity within Rwanda.

Therefore in its attempt to ensure reconciliation and justice, the international intervention through the chief prosecutor led to conflict with the national government and there developed “contradictions, and misunderstanding between the roles of international community and those of the national government” (Erasmus and Fourie p.4). Such developments often lead to unwarranted “lack of commitment and cooperation” needed for the successful implementation of the programs. Moreover, the move undermined the strength of the national government’s efforts towards the establishment of peace, law and order as well as attempts to reinstate the spirit of national patriotism in a society that had been devastated by the spirit of ethnic nationalism and/or loyalty. It equally frustrated the efforts towards the understanding of the “dynamics of gender and post-conflict, about the aspect of genocide on the development and women’s empowerment in Rwanda, about tensions that arise related to justice, democracy and human rights...” (Sandler 2002:1).

Globalization, Collaboration and the Paradox of Political Leadership

In an attempt to inquire and determine whether the various programs that have been put in place both through the national and international community efforts are likely to prevent or ignite future conflicts in Rwanda, there is a need to consider the connections between the past and the present that may have been invisible and try to find a way of

building on to what is already put in place for the purposes of rediscovering a workable resolution to the question of reconciliation, justice and democracy in Rwanda. There are three component parts of conflict that raise the most fundamental questions that are directly intertwined within the process of internationalization of justice and its viability particularly concerning reconciliation and reconstruction. The three component parts are Abandonment, Replacement and Displacement. To understand the impact of these three factors, it is perhaps appropriate to look at them within the context of globalization, that is to say, the extension of outside influence, collaboration and the paradox of political leadership. Globalization often leads to a clash of ideology about justice and democracy and particularly in a society such as Rwanda where the majority cry out for democracy while the fearful minority groups call for justice even if it means shelving democracy for unforeseeable future (Mamdani 2001).

Within a period of just a half a century, serious conflicts have engulfed the human race, resulting in the loss of lives in a disproportionate scale. During this period approximately eighty six million civilians have lost their lives. By the same token, over ten million people have been victims of wars of genocidal nature (Bassiouni 1997; Nyakanzi 1998). Those who managed to survive (Survivors) underwent horrendous experiences ranging from the rape of the girl child and women, sexual slavery, mutilation, militarization of the underage and human rights violation and abuses. These experiences have left the victims totally traumatized. The wars have resulted in the destruction of the infrastructure; destruction of socio-political structures to the extent that the affected states have often been characterized simply as collapsed states (Lemarchand). Some of the conflicts have occurred right in the midst of international deliberations and proclamations.

Emanating from the Second World War experiences attention has been focused on the implication of international humanitarian law which is encapsulated in the concept of indivisibility of international peace. It is from this basis that the application of this concept, the desire to establish the indivisibility of regional and national peace began to filter into other regions of the globe. But one of the most serious challenges to this noble concept has to do with the question of its workability in relation to the restoration and maintenance of peace in areas where there have been unparalleled massive scale of human suffering.

Thus, as an outcome of the Second World War, internationalization of justice has come to mean that international humanitarian law would be applied to individuals whose rights had been violated and abused. As result the UN General Assembly adopted several international humanitarian rights treaties which include: 1948 Convention of the Prevention and Punishment of Crimes of Genocide, 1979 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, 1965 International Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Racial discrimination, 1973 the International Convention on the Suppression and Punishment of the Crime of Apartheid, 1948 Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child. Others are 1992 United Nations Declaration on the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance and 1993 Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women, "The Geneva Conventions and their protocols covering the protection of human rights of soldiers, prisoners of war, and civilians during international and non-international armed conflicts. The Universal Declaration of Human

Rights of 1948, and two covenants of 1966 are now considered part of customary international law” (Wendy Lambourne 1999:1-2).

According to Lambourne (199:2), the implementation of international human rights and humanitarian law to prevent genocide and crimes against humanity has been weak, primarily because of the apparently competing requirement of adherence to the twin principle of state sovereignty and non-interference in the internal affairs of states. When faced with political concerns and constraints, states fall back on respect for state sovereignty as an excuse for inaction, at least at the collective level. This is illustrated most vividly in the case of the 1994 Rwandan genocide which international community failed to stop despite clear evidence before and during its occurrence. Michael Barnett (2002:6), on the other hand, places the responsibility on the UN for its failure to intervene in the Rwandan genocide. He maintains that “The UN is a multidimensional not unidimensional, ethical space. Underlying any indictment of the UN is the presumption that it had moral responsibility to stop the genocide, a duty to aid and protect the innocents. We instinctively believe that genocide and crimes against humanity trump all obligations – other commitments, loyalties and obligations must melt in their presence.” It is from this perspective that one can, indeed, begin to understand the policy of abandonment, and by extension, replacement and displacement, the embodiment of which are political, moral and ethical issues.

Barnett further argues that the UN as an institution is constantly faced with the task of choosing “responsibilities that have immediate consequences.” He emphasizes the fact that, “The UN had responsibilities not only to Rwandans but also to UN personnel who were at risk in the field and to the integrity of an institution that might be severely damaged by another Somalia-like failure in the field. To authorize intervention required the UN to decide that its responsibility to the Rwandans overrode its other commitments. It had to accept the many consequences of a failed intervention on the grounds that there was no greater moral imperative than to stop the killings...” (ibid.p.6). But in choosing to remain inactive, the UN as a global body, in actual fact, enhanced and embraced the policy of abandonment, replacement and displacement. And, “At the end of the day we might conclude that their choices (the UN’s) were not only regrettable but also morally reprehensible, that the UN’s responsibility to act in Rwanda should have transcended other commitments” (ibid.p.6). This act of abandonment meant that the carnage could then go on as a fulfillment of the “final solution” without any interruption or intervention from outside forces.

In his book, *The Burden of Memory, The Muse of Forgiveness*, Wole Soyinka reflects on the African past and the present implosion that has come to characterize the continent. He states that, “the crimes that the African continent commits against her kind are of a dimension and, unfortunately, of a nature that appears to constantly provoke memories of the historic wrongs inflicted on the continent. There are moments when it almost appears as if there is a diabolical continuity (and inevitability?) to it all – that the conduct of the latter-day (internal) slaverunners is merely the stubborn precipitate of a yet unexpiated past” (p.18). In this connection, and particularly in relation to the policy of abandonment, replacement and subsequent displacement, it would not be unreasonable to state that, if the social revolution of 1959 opened the flood gates that ushered in the first stages of genocidal tendencies and subsequent historical massacres as well as the policy of abandonment in which there was unprecedented shift of power structure both for the

Hutu and the Belgians, then the Mutara crossing of October 1, 1990 by the RPF, like the crossing of the Rubicon, sealed the fate of Rwanda, diverting, as it were, any noble attempts at the notion of indivisibility of national peace in Rwanda.

The policy of abandonment accompanied by replacement ultimately led to wars of genocidal proportion and displacement of thousands of Rwandans people. This development invariably led to the regionalization the political, economic and social arrangements within the entire Great Lakes region. Moreover, the mere act of changing sides and the policy of abandonment totally redefined, reconstructed and restructured the political, economic and social set up of the Rwandan society while satisfying the former colonizer's desire for the purification of the soul.

Another example of the policy of abandonment is change of heart in Egypt and its impact on Rwandan political arena. For almost a decade, Egypt had resisted Rwandan overtures for arms deal and, indeed, refused to sell arms to the Rwandan government. But when the Rwandan ambassador to Egypt, Celestin Kabanda and the Egyptian Foreign Affairs Minister, Boutros Boutros-Ghali met on October 16, 1990, Egypt abandoned its international obligation and commitment on arms sale and plugged into arms supply to Rwanda. According Linda Melvern (2004:31), on October 28, 1990 the arms deal was signed between Egypt and Rwanda in the tune of US\$5.889 million. The first shipment of arms to Egypt was simply designated "as relief materials" (ibid.p32). A year later Boutros Boutros-Ghali became the UN Secretary General. And it is interesting to note that it is the same Boutros Boutros-Ghali who stated over and over "that he truly did not comprehend what was taking place on the ground," that is, in Rwanda.

Thus, by 1991 Habyarimana's government was receiving arms not only from Egypt but also from China, France, Belgium as well as the neighboring countries, among them Mobutu's Congo and Kenya whose President Daniel arap Moi was a personal friend of Habyarimana. Incidentally, Moi had engineered the state sponsored ethnic conflict in Kenya to fight against multiparty politics in the country and it is equally interesting to note that both leaders were receiving machetes and training fighters during the same period.

As for the French, Philip Gourevitch (1998:155-156) summarizes their political strategy during the genocide by recapitulating on the work of the celebrated political scientist, Gerard Prunier, who was one of those who formulated the French plan of action for their intervention in Rwanda. Gourevitch reports: "Gerard Prunier, a political scientist who was part of the task force that worked out France's intervention, has written that the greatest worry in Paris as plans for the mobilization got underway in mid-June was whether its troops would find any large concentration of Tutsi to rescue before the television cameras" and this would, invariably, show the humanitarian side of the French. Therefore, for the French it was simply an attempt at the purification of memory from the guilt feeling and a repetition of the history of what Wole Soyinka (1999:109) has observed and captured in another historical context, but equally applicable here: "The 'egalitarianism' that is inscribed on the French national flag was an egalitarianism of cruelty and inhumanity at par with other slaving and colonizing nations on the one hand – no better and no worse – and on the other, a denial of that egalitarian virtue to the black race." But in the case of Rwanda, it was through an act of pitting one ethnic group, (equally black, same language and same cultural practices), against another, instead of embracing and applying the noble concept of "Blessed are the peace makers."

Samantha Power, who carried out an extensive study on the US foreign policy in the age of genocide, not only gives a brilliant account on the Rwandan situation, but also covers other parts of the world as well. In the case of Rwanda she specifically pays particular attention to a number of factors that led to inaction during the genocide and the subsequent withdrawal of the UN Peace keeping force. She explains that because of some of the “failures in the UN peacekeeping, many humanitarian interventionists in the U.S. government were concerned about the failure of America’s relationship with the United Nations generally and peacekeeping specifically. They believed that the UN and humanitarianism could not afford another Somalia” (2002:384). This same argument is supported by Madeleine Albright, the former Secretary of State in the Clinton administration, when she emphatically asserts, “We were determined not to have another Somalia,” but she goes on to state that her “deepest regret from the years in public service” was by all accounts “the failure of the United States and the international community to act sooner to halt those crimes” (2003:147). And Hillary Clinton (2003:404) also expressed the same kind of sentiment, “I regret deeply the failure of the world, including my husband’s administration to act to end the genocide.”

The withdrawal of the UN Peacekeeping force from Rwanda was the ultimate expression of the policy of abandonment, replacement and displacement. In this context, the Rwandans were now left to their own fate. The peacekeeping force was replaced by those who knew that once the UN Peacekeepers were withdrawn, there would be no one else to stop the killing. The impact of this was displacement of the people both internally and regionally. From the international perspective, Samantha Power (2002:383) explains that, “Many internalized the belief that the UN had more to lose by sending reinforcements and failing than by allowing the killings to proceed. Their chief priority, after the evacuation of the Americans, was looking after the UN peacekeepers, and they justified the withdrawal on the grounds that it would ensure a future for humanitarian intervention. In other words, Dallaire’s peace keeping mission in Rwanda had to be destroyed so that peacekeeping might be saved for use elsewhere,” but not in Rwanda where it was needed at that time more than any other place (see also Dallaire 2003).

Although there is a large amount of literature that reveals the position of the UN and the United States as well as other European powers, there is very little information about the British policy on Rwanda before and during the genocide. Whatever information that may throw in some light is secretly guarded to appoint where one is left to ponder about this aspect of the paradox of political leadership. To this extent, Great Britain acted as though nothing much was going on in the world even though the British presence was visibly very close to Rwanda from their High Commission offices in Nairobi, Kenya. According to Linda Melvern (2000:230-231), “The decision-making within the government of Prime Minister John Major leading to British policy on Rwanda in 1994 will doubtless remain a mystery. There is secrecy in government and lack of interest in the media.” Therefore, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office “maintained that it did not know what was going on in Rwanda, which was not in the British sphere.” Thus, the Rwandan genocide shocked the whole world, but the world kept silent and watched on; hoping that someone else should come in and end the tragedy. The neighboring African States waited for some outside force to come in and save the

situation, while some of the Rwandans simply sat there waiting, waiting for the divine intervention or simply waiting for death (Ayot 2003:5).

There is something that the African leadership and African people must learn from the policy of abandonment, replacement and displacement and that is, when it comes to the question of internationalization of justice, the international community will first and foremost protect their own as was evident in the evacuation of foreigners from Rwanda and leaving the Rwandans to save themselves or simply die. And this is why one cannot forget the role played by Paul Rusesabagina in saving the lives of some of the Rwandans. In a speech at St. Sabina's Church in Chicago on February 20, 2005, Paul stated that "if we must die, then we must die fighting." Perhaps this is why President Thabo Mbeki, in his address to the Rwandan people on October 19, 2000, during the National Summit of Unity and Reconciliation emphatically stated, "It is through the support of African countries and through the practice of African unity and solidarity that we, the South African people, could free ourselves from the tyranny of apartheid and establish democracy." President Mbeki went on to say:

"The legacy which led to the genocide and all things that led to the apartheid crime against humanity must be overcome by Africans themselves with assistance from the wider community. And as we do things together, Rwanda and South Africa (and hopefully Africa as a whole) will have something positive to give to the rest of the world. That positive thing, among other things would be that regardless of the pain we have suffered, our own sense of humanity says that we should not seek to visit pain on other people" and more so, our own African people.

CONCLUSION

The centrality of this work has been an attempt to assess the reconstruction and reconciliation programs in post-conflict Rwandan society in order to determine whether these programs are likely to prevent or ignite the recurrence of another conflict in the country. To do this, attention has been focused on women and the National Unity and Reconciliation Commission and how its establishment "contributed to a more profound understanding of gender and post conflict, and the complex dynamics of poverty, trauma, HIV/AIDS, the inequitable burden of care placed on women and gender inequality in a post-conflict country that had almost unprecedented political will towards women's empowerment" (Joanne Sanders 2002:6). Through the NURC women became key players in reconstruction and reconciliation programs while being fully aware of the challenges and obstacles that face their society. Issues such as, truth, reconciliation and forgiveness, justice and democracy, have remained more complex and peace itself has remained rather elusive, encompassing, as it were, both moral, ethical, and political dilemma that cannot be overcome overnight. Wole Soyinka (199:31) explains that "Justice assigns responsibility" and "that justice is an essential ingredient of social cohesion..." and, indeed it constitutes 'the first condition of humanity.'

Owing to the complexities of the 1994 Rwandan genocide, some of the issues concerning governance, justice and democracy have generated critical assessment of the government of Rwanda. Helena Cobban quoting Ge'ard Prunier, the author of *The*

Rwandan Crisis: History of Genocide, asserts that both Prunier and Filip Reyntjens, a Belgian scholar, maintained that those who were detained in the aftermath of the Rwandan genocide were, indeed, “political hostages in Rwanda,” and in Reyntjens’ own words, “The government is holding seven and a half million hostages in Rwanda. The entire population,”(Cobban p.20). On the other hand, both Mamadani (2001:267) and Zorbas (2004:46-47) take issue with the categorization of the various surviving groups, (the returnees, refugees, victims, survivors and perpetrators) in post-conflict Rwanda. They see this labeling of people as an aspect that leads to an assumption that all Hutu are “morally if not legally guilty” while “all Tutsi are victims”(Zorbas 2004:46). By the same token, Zorbas and Rene’ Lemarchand (12) further express concerns about the composition of the political leadership in Rwanda in terms of what Mouzer and Gakusi (April/May 2002) referred to as “tutsification of power in Rwanda.” While Lemarchand talks of “military ethnocracy,” Zorbas articulates her ideas by stating what she feels about the Rwandan government:

But I believe that the ‘Silences,’ coupled with economic development, and a number of emerging parallels between the pre-and post-genocide contexts, amount to grounds for serious concerns. These parallels are summarized in the Rwandan government’s progressive creep towards authoritarianism as seen in the curtailing of political space for opposition groups and freedom of expression, but also in the strong government grip on the national press, the maintenance of a strong, centralized state structure, and the creation of civilian self-defence forces (the Local Defence Forces-FDL) among other things (ibid., 51; see also Bill Berkeley 2001:255-266).

The observations and critiques emerging from these deliberations are healthy developments in the sense that they keep the leadership in check and constant state of alertness. It is also a means of creating awareness on the way the government is run and judged. But while this is one aspect of raising expectations for desirable changes, nevertheless, the alternatives that would help the government to restructure and redirect the course of its programs to enhance a more meaningful democratic and transitional process in Rwanda are not suggested. This notable inability to assist the government means that the dynamics of the critiques tend to impinge on Rwanda’s progress towards national unity, reconstruction and reconciliation. Thus, what is likely to result from these critiques are recidivist pressures that often lead to division among the people, conflict and recurrence of violence as functions begin to “emerge, each claiming to be the best bastion of democracy and that they are willing to pay any price-death of thousands of innocent women, children, and men; the destruction of their fragile infrastructure; and untold destruction of their environment (Blake1998:314). Such developments are likely to take place and would be carried out in the “name of fostering a vision that is articulated for them in the capitals of Europe and the United States and by killing each other with weapons that they do not manufacture or cannot even maintain,” but for which they must pay dearly even if it means shading the innocent blood of their own people.

Therefore, in order to ensure that there is hope for unity, stability, development, reconstruction and reconciliation in a post-conflict society, it is imperative that the leadership understands the enormous burden of globalization, collaboration and paradox of political leadership. This is more so, because the leadership finds itself sandwiched

and squeezed between the forces of a globalized world with its concomitant mega-machinery and mega-bureaucracy whose fearful message resonates the notion that “you are either with us or against us.” Moreover, one of the fundamental realities of globalization and collaboration is the fact that in diplomacy there are only converging interests and ideas not necessarily permanent friendship. For this reason alliances are formed on the promptings of fear or gain and there is no permanency in these alliances. Blake (1998:313) has captured this in a more vivid way. He rightly points out that, “Diplomatic negotiations and communications encounter stiff resistance and get reduced to naked brutal conflicts resulting in internecine carnage in attempts to prove who is more of a democrat and would carry democratic reforms better.” He maintains further that for the most part, “diplomatic negotiations with external sources over democratization and liberalization of the economies” do not usually come from the people themselves and as such, they remain voiceless and powerless, since “the negotiations are structured mainly along the lines of dominant international systems” (ibid;314). It is not being suggested here that diplomatic relations with the outside world is undesirable, far from it, diplomatic relations are vital for the African continent. However, it is imperative that the leadership understands that for the suppliers of weapons of destruction, their motive is purely economic benefits.

Therefore, for the leadership in a post-conflict society, diplomatic negotiations must, out of necessity, begin from the national sources in order to strengthen social relations, political and economic infrastructures. More transparent dialogue with the entire spectrum of the society becomes absolutely important so that the leadership would be able to receive constant feedback from every section of the society. There must be open discussion and constant consultation, as well as monitoring and evaluation of all programs both at the grassroots and national levels. The leadership must be prepared to be slapped from the left and the right while steering the middle course as a buffer zone between the supporters and opposition. This is precisely because the leadership does not have the luxury of just giving the yearly state of the union speech. On the contrary, his is a continuous process that runs simultaneously and concurrently because there are too many wounds that need to be healed.

The women of Rwanda have shown resiliency and found strength in communicating the message of peace and reconciliation. By using communication strategies and persuading others to be more compassionate towards one another, they have become peacemakers by staying in the middle position as they continue to nurture and sustain the lives of every individual, indeed, the entire population in their society. They realized that when people remain bitter and continue to regard and view each other as the enemy, this often results in conflict. And in the process of nurturing this bitterness, they become part of the “warring factions,” with undying “allegiances not only to those whose interests they claim to represent domestically but also to their pay masters who provide the guns, ammunitions, missiles, tankers and in some instances air planes” (Blake 314). It has been said that the wind blows until transformation takes place. In Rwanda the wind is still blowing and it will continue to blow. It will only stop blowing when the Rwandans, (the Hutu, Tutsi and Twa), are all transformed by the realization that they are all survivors. That it is no longer a question of the victors and the vanquished, but that it is about a

people whose hearts have been ripped open and shredded by a terrible, terrible, horrendous tragedy. It is hoped that all Rwandans will be able understand that “for a people to be truly free they must come to terms with the reality of their history in order to overcome its legacy;” in order to make peace with themselves while honoring the memory of those Hutu, Tutsi and Twa who had to pay the price for their survival. For the price of liberty and freedom is costly and none of the surviving Rwandans should take this for granted.