

Economic Assistance at the Intersection of Development and Reconciliation

Introduction

When in *Populorum Progressio*, Pope Paul VI said that “development is the new name for peace”, in his mind was the understanding that “peace is not simply the absence of warfare, based on a precarious balance of power; it [peace] is [rather] fashioned by efforts directed day after day toward the establishment of the ordered universe willed by God, with a more perfect form of justice among men [and women]” (PP #76). These consented efforts that peace requires call upon extended human solidarity among nations, on one hand, and a well coordinated redistribution of national wealth among citizens, on the other hand. Hence, in scenarios of post-conflict situations, solidarity between the wealthy countries and the war-torn nations becomes an ethical imperative that reignites hope for another day and instills faith in possibilities of peace.

In 1994, Rwanda, a small country in the central region of Africa was almost brought to the brink of its extinction following a three month period of genocide against the Tutsi ethnic group. It is in the public knowledge that the post-genocide regime inherited a dilapidated economy, and a ghost nation where a million of Tutsi and moderate Hutu people had been killed and two million others had run into exiled, while several other millions were internally displaced. If 28 years down the line, the reconstruction efforts are still underway, it is nonetheless an obvious fact that the strides achieved thus far can serve as a lesson to learn, a model to emulate, or else a testimony to claim that indeed peace is development, where development means solidarity and mutual empathy.

Considering the severity of devastation wrought by the genocide and the daunting task of reconstruction that the country of Rwanda has had to deal with since 1994, this paper aims to demonstrate the role played by the international solidarity in providing the financial assistance; the paper examines also the efficiency of the post-genocide leadership assessing the manner in which it has been able to translate the enormous foreign aid it has received into a driving force of development and reconciliation through reconstruction projects, direct assistance to the vulnerable, and various programs for the administration of justice and reconciliation activities.

To this end, three main considerations guide the development of this presentation, namely the outbreak of the genocide against the Tutsi and management of its aftermath, the assessment of post-genocide international assistance and the management of the latter toward the reconstruction process and reconciliation efforts among the people of Rwanda, and lastly but not least the democratization process that the country is striving to establish thus far.

1. Genocide against Tutsi and its Aftermath

In April 1994, immediately after the plane that carried the then Rwandan President, Juvenal Habyarimana was shot down, elimination of opposition leaders began and ironically, what was subsequently to become an attempt to annihilate the Tutsi began with the assassination of moderate Hutu who were in the coalition government of the time (USAID, 2002). The killing was done by parts of the Army, the militias called Interahamwe, and by the neighbors. In some mixed families, relatives killed Tutsi, sometimes parents killed their own children, and some Hutu were killed because they were regarded as unwilling to go along with the genocide or simply as political opponents (Staub, 1). Thus, for one hundred days, between April and July 1994, as many as one million Rwandans (out of a population of between seven and eight million) were killed by their fellow countrymen/women, usually in broad daylight using machetes, garden instruments, and other tools (McNamee, 382).

The genocide was stopped by a Tutsi group, the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) that had been fighting the government before a peace accord and resumed fighting when the genocide began. By the time the RPF brought the genocide to a halt, the country was left with four most urgent questions to grapple with, namely (1) the refugee question and resettlement of the internally displaced persons, (2) demilitarization of the population and reintegration of the defeated former combatants, (3) reinstatement of the rule of law and administration of justice, (4) reconstruction of the social fabric and infrastructure.

The solutions to the above four challenges largely lied on the social and economic capital, which a country, like Rwanda, freshly out of social unrest normally lacked. The conflicts had created a situation whereby, the villages were laid waste, houses, shops and warehouses systematically rooted or destroyed, transport and communication interrupted, agricultural land covered in landmines, while banking, healthcare and education were completely destroyed (Smoljan, 239).

From the foregoing therefore, reconstruction programs and a proper return to normalcy solely depended on external aid. It is against this background that the following section discusses the manner in which Rwanda has tried to manage its aid for post-conflict reconstruction mainly trying to address the problems of peace building which comprised the administration of justice and governance.

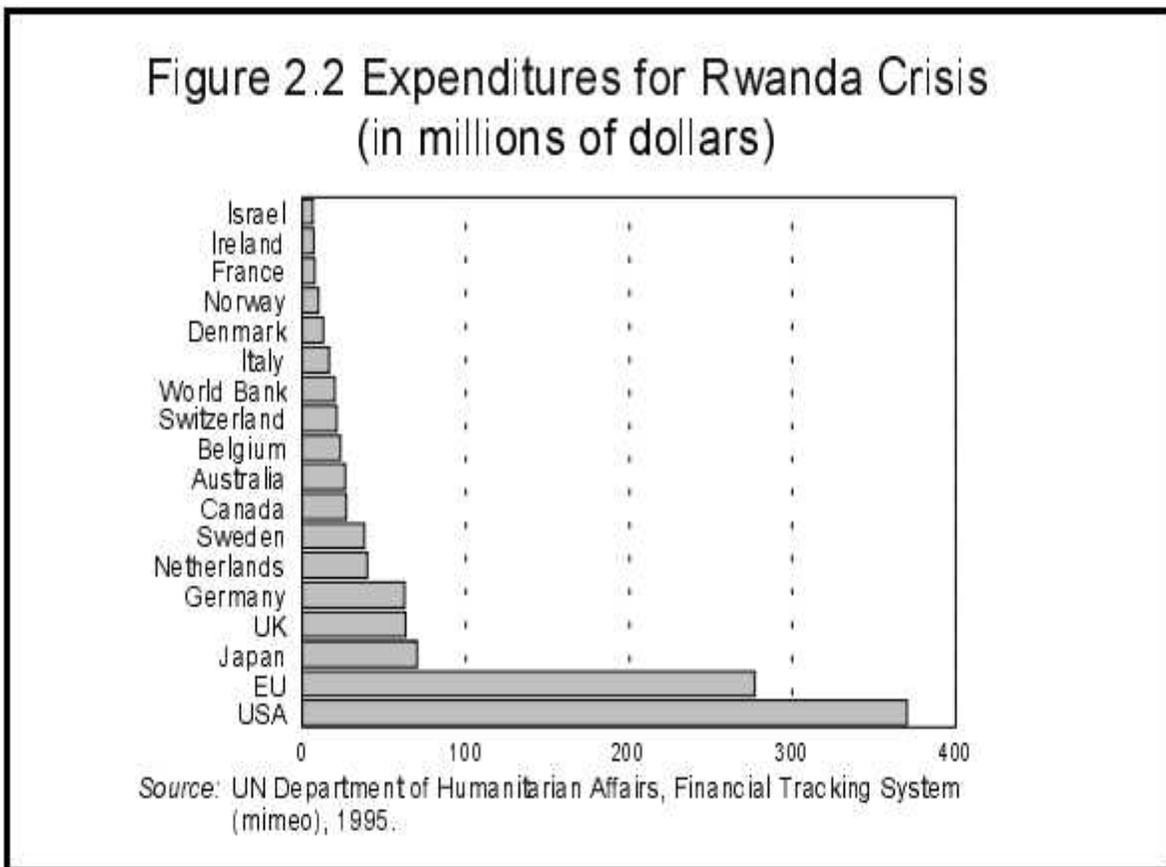
2. Effects of Economic Assistance on Development and Peace-building Processes

a. Economic Assistance in Post-genocide Rwanda

The crime of genocide destroys hope and trust, and dehumanizes people. Reconciliation is therefore a painful process that requires the reparation of the torn social fabric, healing of wounds, rebuilding of a sense of togetherness, and creation of institutions that promote national unity, and accountability (Ndangiza, 2005). Assessing the post-genocide state of affairs in Rwanda, the Amnesty International claimed that

Few nations have been faced with the situation confronting the new Rwandan government [...] following the genocide. The gravity and magnitude of human rights violations, the level of civilian participation in them, the massive dislocation of Rwandese and the nearly complete destruction of the administrative infrastructure are virtually unparalleled in human history (2002).

In cognizance of the severity of devastation wrought by the genocide, the international community shifted its attention towards rehabilitation and reconstruction of Rwanda. The United Nations and donor agencies embarked on supporting a wide array of programs in different sectors; and in the process, the UNDP organized a “January 1995 Roundtable Pledging Conference for Rwanda Reconstruction”. During the same, a shared framework was formulated and as the year progressed, the level of pledged assistance grew to slightly more than \$ 1 billion (see below Figure 2.2 of USAID Special Study, 1996).



Even though for many years, Rwanda enjoyed a relative preferential option among majority of donor-agencies, the likes of this treatment grew up exponentially still from the post-genocide era moving forward. This led some observers to dubbing the country “the aid darling” of the international donors. Adding to the foregoing, the chart below help demonstrate, against all prejudices, that from 1990 to 2016 Rwanda had received more foreign aid in the form of

development assistance per capita than its policies and institutional indicators would have predicted (Desrosiers et al, 6). (See the table below of the net Official Development Assistance [ODA] per capita, where the latter twice reached its peak in 1996 and 2011)

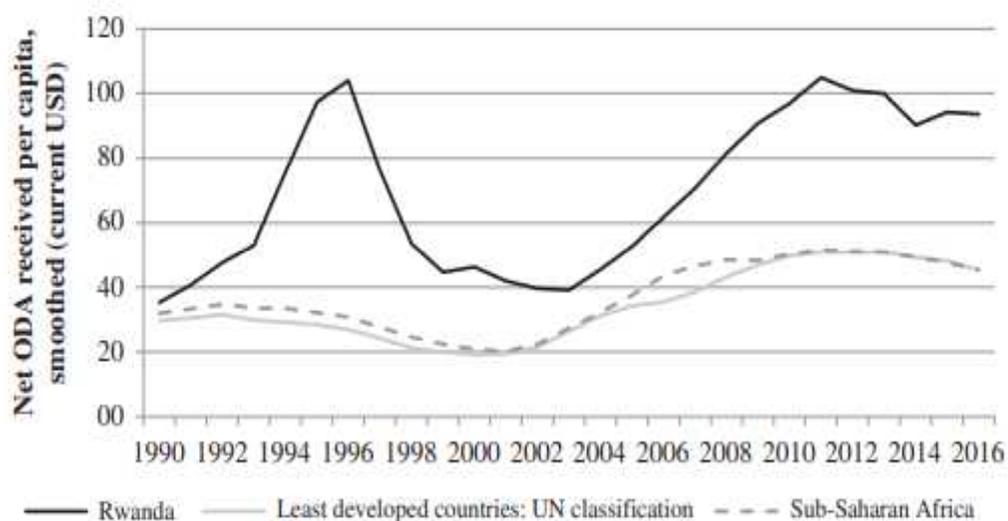


Figure 1 Net ODA received per capita, 1990–2016.

Source: The World Bank’s World Development Indicators (databank.worldbank.org/wdi). Smoothed values equal the three-year moving average of ODA per capita (the average of the current and past two years).

b. Development through Human Capital Investment and Peace-building

As already shown thus far, the Rwandan government has indeed benefited from a considerable amount of foreign aid which has helped in reinstating effective institutions of governance and development programs for the victims of the genocide. Chief among the noticeable post-genocide initiatives have been:

- **FARG** (*Fond d’Appuis aux Rescapés du Genocide* - Assistance Fund for the Survivors of the Genocide)

Following the genocide against Tutsi, the government of Rwanda soon accepted its obligation under international law to provide compensation and rehabilitation to the victims. It went on to create FARG with the mission of promoting social economic rehabilitation of the survivors. Its operations got funds from the subtraction of 5% of the annual national budget and other occasional donations from within or foreign organizations. Its areas of intervention comprised (1) Provision of healthcare assistance to the survivors of the genocide; (2) Livelihoods support for the vulnerable individuals; (3) Support for education of children mainly those who lost their parents to genocide and poor families of the survivors; (4) Offering housing and shelter for all homeless survivors and creation of income generating small enterprises for them.

By 2018, twenty years after its inception, FARG had received over 272 million Euros of funding which had enabled it (1) to provide medical assistance on over 2 million occasions worth 19, 8 million Euro, (2) to subsidize education cost to over 110,000 genocide survivors, and (3) to construct over 54,000 homes for homeless survivors for whom also (4) over 54,000 income generating small enterprises were mounted. Of significant notice is that these homes are built in settlements called “reconciliation villages” in which genocide survivors live side by side with those who have played a role in one way or another in the genocide (JusticeInfo.Net, 2019).

- **Gacaca Court** (a traditional Rwandan practice intended to serve both justice and reconciliation)

In 2002, after long years of discussion and deliberation, Rwanda launched the Gacaca courts to help provide justice to Genocide survivors and to give assistance to the judicial system which was so far overwhelmed by the amount of genocide-related cases it was supposed to attend to. By 2002, approximately 112,000 Rwandans were in the country’s overcrowded detention facilities and living in conditions that constituted cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment. Most of the detainees had not been tried in a court of law, and there were little likelihood that most of them would have their cases heard by the country’s existing ordinary jurisdictions, which heard on average 1,500 genocide cases a year. (Projections had it that going by the pace of the ordinary jurisdictions, genocide cases could have needed over 100 years for the detainees to have their day in a court of law (Amnesty International, 2002).

The Gacaca court system represented a homegrown groundbreaking attempt to restore the Rwandese social fabric torn by the armed conflict and genocide by locating the trials of those alleged to have participated in the genocide within the community in which the offenses had been committed. The process led to the creation of about 9-10 thousand small communities which elected judges who met weekly in meetings with their respective community members. Their proceedings resulted into establishment of lists of those who lived in the communities the day before and during the genocide, the crimes that were committed and by whom. They also decided what people who had done harm needed to do to be accepted back into the community. Thanks to the Gacaca courts, crimes have been laid bare, and truth established. The survivors have been able to know where their relatives were buried and the manner in which they were killed; while most of the perpetrators were sentenced for a combination of prison term and community labor (Staub, 2012).

- **Ingando** (a traditional concept which refers to “a military encampment or assembly area).

Today, Ingando is a civic education activity that has been used to facilitate the smooth reintegration of former returnees, ex-combatants, and provisionally released prisoners back into their communities. The program has also been extended to Rwandans from all walks of life; they are called to participate as groups of shared professional interests such as school teachers, ministerial civil servants, youth groups of school leaving age, Rwandans in Diaspora, local leaders, and entrepreneurs, to mention just a few. The camps provide forums for Rwandans to come to terms with their history by facing their past, and forging a common vision for a united future. They also serve to instill a sense of national identity and overcome mutual fear and suspicion.

- **Vision 2020**

In 2000, Rwanda launched its ‘Vision 2020’ strategic framework for the country’s future development. Contrary to most other countries which embark on similar journey aiming to change course, build on or reverse existing projects, the post-genocide Rwanda had substantially nothing else to start with, it had to begin all from scratch. The vision 2020 document and subsequent policies related to it have been critical to building peace and consolidating national cohesion among Rwandans.

Rwanda has proved exceptionally adept at managing its limited resources and fighting corruption by maintaining internal and external control in ways that permit long-term investment. Between 2001 and 2015, overall poverty reduced by 19.8 percent while extreme poverty declined by 23.7 percent. The country became one of the world’s fastest growing economies year in year out; the only low income country in the World Bank’s top 30 “easiest places to do business”; and a mini tourism Capital, increasing revenues from visitors from US \$27 million in 2000 to US \$438 million in 2017. In the process, Rwanda’s partners have praised the country for its scrupulous attention to accountability, transparency, and efficiency in deploying its scarce resources to key economic sectors (McNamee, 385).

3. Governance and Process of Democratization in a Post-war Context

As far as politics is concerned, no country in Africa, arguably in the world, divides opinions among scholars and commentators as Rwanda. The polarized nature of the debate is generally as follows:

Rwanda is a remarkable development success, risen from the ashes of mass ethnic slaughter, steered and safeguarded by a visionary leader; or Rwanda is a case of autocratic recidivism, masked by implausibly rosy statistics and a bogus narrative of national unity, contrived by a strongman intent on staying in power forever (McNamee, 380).

Admittedly, no study on Rwanda can avoid this discussion but it needs not be the dominant focus. As demonstrated in the just concluded discussions on economics and development, the post-genocide Rwanda has attained remarkable heights in terms of reduced poverty, sustained economic growth, less corruption and improvement in public safety that speak for themselves. And it goes without saying that behind these successes, there is a leadership which certainly did not follow the popular model of democratization but still all in all was a kind of leadership model that the people of Rwanda had themselves chosen to embark on.

After the genocide of 1994, Rwandans themselves wondered whether political competition could serve to build the state or it risked to destroy it. Considering a society freshly out of a traumatic event like the genocide, the question had been to figure out how the country could move from civil war to peace while avoiding to get stuck in the dangerous swamp of violent peace (Sezibera, 2018). In different forums, people had thought that the introduction of competitive elections (under pressure from the West) in the early 1990s has tilled the field for the later genocide, as Hutu-led political parties campaigned on virulent anti-Tutsi platforms in fragmented political landscape (McNamee, 384).

Between 1998 and 2002, there have also been intensive discussions between representatives of political parties and civil society stakeholders in Rwanda to examine the most convenient model to guide the country's governance taking into consideration the history (ancient and recent), the cultural values that cemented an evolving Rwandan polity over the years and the deficits of leadership and governance that had led the country to the genocide (Sezibera, 2018).

Partisans to the discussions reached agreements on promoting and defining the demarcations of what constitutes the rule of law, promotion of national unity and national reconciliation, power sharing, the return of refugees, integration of warring forces at the time of the discussions, as well as the political code of conduct for political parties. The partisans' agreements elaborated also six fundamental principles on which the country was to be built:

- (1) Prevention and punishment of the crime of genocide
- (2) Eradication of discrimination and divisionism based on ethnicity and region
- (3) Equitable power sharing
- (4) Building a state governed by the rule of law
- (5) Building a state committed to promoting social welfare
- (6) Constant quest for solutions through dialogue and consensus

The post-genocide Rwanda's governance model values in high esteem the quest for solutions through dialogue and consensus. This is against the background from which democracy in Africa is always interpreted to mean multiparty competition for power and resources, whereby majorities are built on ethnic groupings or other radicalized identities. Considering its historical context, Rwanda instead opted for a power sharing leadership model informed by the constant

quest for dialogue and consensus. The processes to guarantee the materialization of this consensus include:

- (1) A National Consultative Forum of Political Organizations which brings together political organizations for purposes of political dialogue and building consensus and national unity
- (2) Selection of government members (the cabinet) following a proportionality principle of representation of the political organizations that have won seats in the chamber of Deputies.
- (3) Organization of annual national dialogue where the President and citizen's representatives come together to debate issues related to the state of the nation and national unity

Conclusion

In this presentation I have attempted to demonstrate the many strides that Rwanda has been able to make in its efforts of post-genocide reconstruction and nation-state rebuilding. From the status of a failed state, I have been able to show that Rwanda has heavily relied on the good-will of the international community and the generosity of development agencies who have donated resources to enable the Rwanda's post-genocide leadership to embark effectively on the reconstruction of the country's political, economic, and social institutions. Despite the obvious shortcomings, and legitimate criticisms, that can be level against the implementation of policies, my discussion's chief aim has been to describe the resilience with which Rwandans were able to come together and forge the future of a country they want to have through dialogue, consensus, and common vision. In closing, I would like to underline the point that it is not just a simple coincidence that economic development stands out among contributing factors to the Rwandan road to reconciliation and peace-building. Development has given hope to people and reassured the survivors of the possibilities of a better tomorrow even after tragic losses of lives and belongings.

Patrice Ndayisenga, SJ
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