

## Rwanda Brief - the Leadership Needed to Bring Change

### What are the forces for Genocide?

During my many visits to Rwanda I have met with government, business, education, media and religious leaders of the nation. They have communicated their perspective regarding the forces that were at work preceding the 1994 Genocide. From listening to them, the primary issues fall under four major categories.

1. Bad leadership ruled the nation. Going back to the days of the kings, Rwanda has lacked servant leaders who mobilize the people and lead them to work together for the common good. Leaders have been self-serving, unable or unwilling to foster unity for the well-being of the people. Most lacked training in organizational development and were not grounded in the sound values or morals on which a nation must be established. Even in the churches, it is estimated that 80% of the pastors are not educated beyond an 8<sup>th</sup> grade level and lacked significant theological and pastoral training. Consequently, the leaders were involved in propagating the myths, lies and divisions that fueled the conflict. Even today, it is feared by some that there still remains a “genocide ideology” embedded in many leaders and their constituency.
2. There was a basic culture of impunity. No real justice system permitted fair, equitable, consistent and unified resolution of legal and judicial matters. Under colonial rule there was much favoritism and general amnesty. Killing and appropriating the victim’s property was regularly carried out without cries for justice. The concept of “democracy” was foreign to the populous. In fact, it was stated that often unjust acts of leaders were rewarded with promotion. Thus, people did not know the rule of law and ethics for living and governing the nation.
3. Poverty was rampant. No training was offered to foster entrepreneurship and job creation. People lived at a subsistence level, easily manipulated by their colonial rulers simply by the promise of food and shelter. It is reported that they were told to hunt other humans as animals if they wanted to acquire their wealth.
4. General ignorance and lack of universal education for the masses was another force for genocide. People were blinded to truth and easily influenced for negative actions. Many lies and myths were propagated including the lie that Tutsis were “cockroaches.” As stated above, church leaders lacked biblical training and were not adept at being a source of truth. They were not able to intellectually handle complex issues and craft biblical messages to shape the minds and values of the people. The Executive Director of the National Unity and Reconciliation Commission stated publicly that the Christian Church leaders should have been the moral conscience of the nation. Instead, they were party to divisions and even incited killings. If they had acted according to the biblical mandate of truth, love and reconciliation, there would likely have been no genocide.

### The Challenges for Rebuilding the Nation

The list of needs in the nation is long. New and effective leadership will be needed. Vision 2020 is a significant document that has been produced by the government. From my perspective I will attempt to synthesize key issues into the major areas that have surfaced in the past 15 years.

1. Traditions, Compassionate Action and Culture:
  - a. Burials and honoring of the dead. Until families deal with the past and their ancestors, they will not heal and be prepared for the future.
  - b. Care for orphans and widows/widowers that are honoring and not institutional.
  - c. Repatriate and integrate the refugees.
  - d. Sensitize the people to the rebuilding process and train them in common cultural values.
  - e. De-centralize ownership and initiative so that the people take action to rebuild and develop their own communities.
2. Government:
  - a. Integrate the army as one national force rather than regional militias.
  - b. Establish a system and process for justice. The Gacaca Courts has been a significant action to this end. The separation of government power into three branches is helpful.
  - c. Establish a democratic process for governing and training citizens in the process of democracy and shared power.
  - d. Develop international and regional partnerships and relations that will permit the people to expand their knowledge, education, markets, and ideas beyond their own borders.
3. Education and Training:
  - a. Establish and fund an educational system without gender or ethnic discrimination that promotes education for all thru at least a secondary level.
  - b. Train leaders for all sectors of society, including organizations and institutions, with a new sense of worth and dignity as well as with skills and servant attitudes.
  - c. Train church leaders to be able to shepherd the people (some 90% of the population identifies as Christian) in biblical thinking, godly living and community service. Lack of education causes these leaders to struggle with complex theological issues.
  - d. Train and promote unity in diversity, national solidarity and conflict resolution.
  - e. Offer processes or forums where the people may openly speak about their wounds, pain, and fears with each other. There is a great need for confession and reconciliation at the community and national levels that must include the leaders of the nation speaking to one another.
  - f. Build cross-sector partnerships for leaders from different sectors of society to come together to plan and strategize how to address and solve problems and issues.
  - g. Support and train entrepreneurs in job creation and capacity building for business and economic development that permits market growth internally and externally.
  - h. Address the public health matters of hygiene, sexuality, nutrition, sanitation, maternity, child development, HIV/AIDS, malaria, etc.