

“12 years after genocide in Rwanda – Youth between hope and suffering”

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Abstract

The genocide in Rwanda, committed by youth militias, militaries and civil persons, concerns the whole humanity. The international community failed to stop the on-going massacres of several hundred thousands of people from April to June 1994. About three million people fled their homes in or outside the country.

Today the Rwandan society is composed of persons with quite different histories and perceptions of what happened. The situation of young people is very diverse: survivors, mutilated children, children of perpetrators, former refugees and displaced persons, raped girls and their children, former child-soldiers. Most of them experienced dehumanization and brutal violence, the loss of relatives or friends. A high number of young people are orphans. Although the majority of Rwandans is living today under obviously “normal” conditions, most of them are deeply injured. Many young people lost their “original trust”. They experienced a break in development from childhood to adult, destruction of social structures, disturbance of emotions, permanent presence of death and murder, loss of values, questioning of their identity, stigmatization being either victims or perpetrators, - a culture of silence. Thus there is a big gap between historical and subjective “truth”.

The Rwandan society is confronted with the past on a daily basis. To overcome this unbearable situation children and young people must get the opportunity to learn how to deal with the past and their suffering. Although most of them have a high potential to deal with the present, their right of a healthy future is not evident. They need space and time to become subject of their history, to regain their human dignity, to say good bye to their assassinated relatives. This process of healing takes time, forgiveness - and maybe one day reconciliation first with themselves and then with others - will enhance their recovering. Healing must be considered as a socio-political process with reference to the history of the whole society.

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Introduction

The purpose of this contribution is to present the actual conditions of children and youth in Rwanda in a socio-political context and to analyse some issues that are important for the creation of new perspectives for a healthier and less on violence and conflicts based future.

The following paper is the result of personal experiences, studies, seminars with members of the Rwandan society and intense listening of the author to some hundred people since 1978. Concerning the topic, in the aftermath of genocide 1994, a lot of conversations were made with young people and adults as well in Rwanda itself as also with members of the Rwandan society who are living in other African or European countries.

1. Looking backwards

The genocide and the crimes against humanity perpetrated in Rwanda and neighbouring countries, concern and influence the whole humanity and not only the Rwandan society. At least due to colonialism by the Germans in 1897 all structures of society - political, economic, legal, psychological and socio-cultural - were changed, after all a new history of Rwandan society was invented and the evolution of the country was embedded in international context.¹ In 1923 the League of Nations

decided that Rwanda was ruled by Belgium (trusteeship). Besides the Belgian occupation the main role of interfering came from the Catholic Church, especially from the "Société des Missionnaires d'Afrique", called White fathers, most of them being French missionaries.² Other important negative impacts of colonialism were the change of political structures and a monopolization of power by a small elite, the christianization of society accompanied by a decline of genuine culture and loss of former beliefs, social cohesion and values, additionally an "ethnisation" of the population based on racist stereotypes and unscientific theories based on the bible (Hamitic thesis). It was a real ethnogenesis stigmatizing the population through a division in superior and inferior groups.

"Clan hierarchies rather than ethnicity, however, characterized Rwanda's social structure until the mid-nineteenth century, when the Tutsi king, Kigeri Rwabugiri (1860-95), assumed the throne. It was he who moulded Rwanda into a Tutsi dominated structure to consolidate his own power.

The fact that in both Rwanda and Burundi the Hutu represented the majority of the population did not deter German colonialists from perpetuating Tutsi domination when Germany established rule over the territory in 1899. On the contrary, Germany - as Belgium would do later from 1916 virtually to 1959 - fostered Tutsi dominance as a means of maintaining control." (Minear and Kent 1998, p.60) ... "The patterns of domination/subordination between these two major ethnic groups were strengthened by the European perception with its corresponding belief in the natural superiority of the Tutsis. As a result, this perception had at least three important impacts on the historical evolution of Rwanda. First, it conditioned the views and attitudes of the Europeans regarding Rwandan social groups. Second, it governed the decisions made by the German and Belgian colonial authorities. And, third, it had a profound impact on both ethnic groups in inflating the Tutsi cultural ego inordinately and insulting Hutu feelings until they coalesced into an aggressively resentful inferiority complex." (UNHCR December 1998, para. 2.1)³

Since the forced independence by the United Nations in 1962 the Catholic church and linked organizations like parties played a main role in Rwanda on all levels, for instance in education, health care and economic activities. Besides more and more multi- and bilateral institutions like the Worldbank, International Monetary Fund, development agencies from Belgium, Canada, France, Germany and other non-governmental organizations exerted influence in Rwanda. From the beginning of the 1990 Human rights organizations, private initiatives and enterprises and later a lot of sects started influencing the development of the country. Today the United States of America, Great Britain and the Netherlands are the biggest donors. International medias like BBC, Voice of America, Deutsche Welle and Radio France International have a great influence on the opinions.

More than a century external actors play an important role in the Rwandan society. But in 1994, a time when international support was more needed than ever the international community failed to help and left the country, leaving behind it the on-going massacres of thousands and thousands of people.⁴ The third genocide of the 20th century was taking place. All foreigners were evacuated; often Rwandan citizens were not allowed

to get evacuated, even being employees of international donors. The Security Council refused to recognize that there genocide was on-going. The American ambassador at the Security Council Madame Madeleine Albright, being herself a survivor of the Shoa in Europe, got the order from the U.S, State Secretary: "Don't use the g-word".⁵ In spite of the lobbying of international non-government organizations to western governments and the UN the global political players refused to intervene in the conflict and to save thereby the life of about one million people.⁶ It is a fact that the international community was informed about everything that was going on in Rwanda, although the information being contradictory, depending from which side it came. It is undoubtful that the massacres could have been stopped or at least limited if an international presence would have stayed in Rwanda and if the UN-contingent of about 2.500 UN-bluehelmets would have been reinforced in number instead of reduced to 450. After the international community had left the country the field was open for the killers.⁷

The fact that the international community abandoned the Rwandan population caused a lot of bitterness in the people. No words can describe the atrocities committed and the suffering of the persecuted persons; the whole country was covered with massgraves of about one million killed Rwandans.⁸ One singularity of this genocide in human history is that a lot of civil persons were involved in the massacres, even neighbours killed neighbours, husbands and fathers killed their spouse, their family and relatives.

In July 1994 the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) took over and created the third republic after the independence. About two million people fled Rwanda to neighbouring countries, the luckiest to Europe, USA or Canada. In spite of differences in personal and political background most of them were considered as perpetrators. In September 1996 the refugees' camps in Zaïre (later Democratic Republic of Congo) were destroyed, about 500.000 persons returned to Rwanda, others fled to other countries, about 200.000 persons got "lost" in the forests despite a well functioning GPS-system.⁹ In Congo, due to war starting in May 1997, about three million people lost their life in combats, killings by militias or starving from hunger. The international community invested a lot to support the peace building process in Congo and to organize the first free elections since 1965 in 2006 in the country.

Since 1994, Rwanda was rebuilt by important efforts supported by international donors. Political, administrative and legal institutions were created; the infrastructure and the social sector (health, education) were rehabilitated. Besides a western orientated legal system in the country and the International Tribunal in Arusha, Tanzania, a so-called traditional conflict resolution procedure (agacaca) was modernized to deal with the high number of detainees and accused of commitment of genocide or other crimes.¹⁰

What is now going on in Rwanda must be considered in an international and a regional context, especially in neighbouring countries like Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo and Uganda. Economic interests (natural resources: coltan, gold, copper, diamond - and agricultural resources in the eastern part of Congo) and the struggle to control these resources are the most important reasons for the interventions. The Rwandan government defends that the insecurity and aggression from Rwandan militias from Congo are the main reason of intervening in Congo.

These multi-dimensional causes for the slaughter and massacres in the Great Lakes Region have to be considered when new perspectives for the society in this region will be created, that are not dominated by conflicts.

2. The consequences of genocide for children and youth

2.1 The internationalization of Rwandan society

After 1994 the Rwandan society became more internationalized in the country itself with a great number of Rwandans living in countries all around the world. Several hundred thousands people, descendants of the Batutsi-group which was persecuted during the so-called social revolution from 1959 to 1962, left their exile, mostly in neighbouring countries like Burundi, Congo and Uganda, and reintegrated their parents' home country. About two million refugees who were living in the region since 1994 returned. By November 1998 in the northwest of Rwanda due to an armed conflict between insurgent and government forces violence caused the internal displacement of 630,000 persons. In 2002 more than 24,500 returnees arrived in Rwanda. Till today people are fleeing the country - in 2005 about 10.000 to Burundi -, others are returning which results in great instability in the composition of society.¹¹

The actual society of Rwanda is composed by people with great differences in their live stories and different perceptions of the history of their country and of the events during the last decades. There are survivors from genocide in Rwanda and people who stayed during war and genocide, but were displaced in other regions.

A lot of the descendants of refugees have lived under precarious conditions in exile, but for most of them repatriation was not their option because the former government refused their free return to the country. Sometimes younger ones did not learn the Rwandan language, Kinyarwanda, and for them psychologically their parents' or grandparents' home country was very far. Others returned having more comfortable live conditions with a high education background. Many persons lived for several years in refugee or internally displaced camps.

Today, Rwandans who are living in exile in western countries have mostly better economic conditions, but often endure lack in secured legal status, suffer from racism or stigmatization that they are coming from a society of killers, and the feeling of homelessness. Especially in Belgium, where the biggest group is living, most Rwandans are deeply divided by so-called ethnic affiliation.

2.2 The living conditions of children and youth

Socio-psychological distress, physical hurts and an overwhelming deception and frustration about the disaster are the causes of traumatising of the population. Today about 50% of the population are younger than 18 years (total in 2002: 8,2 Million), a high number are orphans due to the war, the genocide or HIV/AIDS.

Eleven years after genocide - in 2005 - 900,000 persons were living in Rwanda in inadequate shelter conditions, 1,250,000 are orphans, 500,000 HIV/Aids victims, 87,000 detainees and 900 minors in prison, 7,000 street children, 3,600 children in "Centres pour Enfants non-accompagnés" and 101,000 child-headed households.¹²

Most of the children and young people experienced genocide and massacres in or outside the country, the loss of family members and friends, or observing of killings, flight and return to Rwanda. Some saved themselves being thrown in mass graves leaving behind their dying relatives. Displaced persons and refugees lived for years under inhuman conditions (under plastic sheetings, insufficient nutrition, no school etc.). During genocide in Kigali, the capital of Rwanda, about 75% of the children and young people lost at least one person of their household. 49% don't know where they are buried. 74% confess that children in their neighbourhood are suffering of traumatising.¹³

Experiences of young people with genocide and crimes against humanity are quite diverse: Surviving children during genocide considered as Batutsi (Tutsi), surviving children of crimes against humanity considered as Bahutu (Hutu) and those categorised as Batwa (Twa). Many suffer from physical injuries: A lot of children were gravely hurt; a lot of girls and women suffered from rape and sexual abuse and were infected by HIV. About 250,000 girls and women were raped during genocide.¹⁴

Child-soldiers were mutilated. Sometimes children were running for days or weeks after adult people, running away. Others were not well nourished during years.

Social and psychological injuries like the loss of relatives and friends cause disorder and stress. A lot of young people were born in exile and returned to an unknown society, sometimes not even speaking the national language. For most of this generation genocide is an every day subject of talking; it is ever present in media and

official discourses. Actually the agacaca procedure is going on, which should clarify in public testimonies who plays which role during genocide, who are the victims, who the perpetrators and what is their guilt.

In spite of all efforts the socio-economic situation is extremely difficult for young people.¹⁵ About 95% of the population are living of poor agricultural subsistence economy. Access to schools and the enrolment of children are much better than before 1994, but employment possibilities in non-agricultural sectors are very low. Those who have the financial possibilities try to get the highest qualification possible – education is considered as a value which can't be stolen by anybody.

2.3 Between hope and suffering

As mentioned before, the past and present experiences of children and young people are quite different. They never have the chance to talk about it because there is no social space to speak.¹⁶ A relative small number shows clinical symptoms, most of them are dealing with the present through their hope that the future will be better than the past.

A majority shares the following social and psychological characteristics:

- **Loss of original trust**

The experience of death of relatives, neighbours, parents or friends by killing, sometimes the father killed the mother or his children, leads to a loss of original trust in others, an important item for a good health. To feel abandoned by relatives and friends or even the whole world caused the impression that they are not belonging to any social group, to be excluded and feeling lonesome in a hostile environment. They even question their right of life. In 1994 people belonged to a “false group”, and were at a false time at a false place. The fact of persecution due to no other reason than the belonging to the Batutsi-group denied them their right to live; it distinguished these persons from others who were threatened too. The effect is that nobody will be trusted, not the family, nor friends or political authorities who gave order to kill or did not prevent it. This leads to uncertainty, insecurity and instability in relation to others but also within. Whom to trust, when not even oneself? “Is it possible to change from victim to perpetrator?” is a very troubling question for a girl and makes a balanced life difficult. Mistrust prevails in society which limits social relations to small groups or, in case of surviving, to the nuclear family.

- **A disrupted childhood and adolescence**

The children and adolescents of 1994 have in common the feeling of a stolen childhood. The atrocities experienced and the responsibilities taken over in few hours lead to the loss of their “innocence”, their openness to the world, their positive emotions and their right to play, they lost their social, psychological and economic security system. Sometimes they had to decide about life or death of others. Today they have to deal with their lost relatives and friends. They had to become adults long before the age of being adult. A disrupted childhood leads to an oscillation between a reasonable and responsible personality and the need to be like a child, to be taken in charge, to get social and emotional care.

During genocide the majority of killers (youth militia) were young people, these perpetrators and their children bear a heavy burden. Other children are the “result” of rape, or lost their parents on the flight, or don’t know their family or have any relatives. A great number of children are growing up in households without parents or elder persons.

- **The destruction of family and social structures**

Family and social relations were destroyed. The assassination of family members reduced the number of formerly extended families and the confidence in each other. A lot of families were composed of members of the Batutsi and the Bahutu. During genocide they were forced to separate, men were forced to kill their spouse. Today Batutsi are considered as victims, Bahutu as perpetrators. In a lot of families, some are victims, other are perpetrators. Before genocide people asked for the wellbeing of the family when they met one another. This ritual was abandoned afterwards. Nobody will ask, because of the possibility that the interlocutor is the only survivor of a large family, perhaps the lady lost her children and husband, the baby is the “product” of a rape from the enemy and not recognised, the husband is in prison or condemned for genocide. This causes uncertainty, negative or positive sentiments or even aggression and assumptions arise about the convictions of the others on the past or present and about fantasies in relation to attitudes and behaviour. The social contract was broken. This leads to social isolation and fear.

A lot of children are growing up without parents and more without fathers, because they were killed, died of AIDS, are in exile or in prison since years. This means that there is no parental authority, no psychological or emotional support. Compared to the situation before genocide many live psychologically and socially isolated.

All values, norms and social contracts were questioned in 1994. There were no restrictions in killing people, often in an atrocity manner, no respect of properties, no regard of the live, behaviour and role a person had, or of her age. Innocent babies and grandmothers were murdered. The impunity was total. The church, having monopolized the ethics and moral codes of the society during one century, lost its monopole quite before 1994, but there was no institution to replace it.¹⁷

On the other side it happened during genocide that people protected others and saved children, often under the threat to be killed themselves. There are a lot of unknown heroes in the society.

- **The loss of emotion und the difficult way to suffer**

It is hardly to support the loss of such a high number of people without any justification. Often is observed a loss of emotion, as building a wall around sentiments. Death and killings became normal and a walling-off to the dead beloved ones is current.

The possibilities of mourning are limited. Some found a way to commemorate their dead by praying and self-organized encounters; others lack possibilities to commemorate in their way. Every year during the week of 7th April, the starting of genocide in 1994, commemoration is organized all around the country, mass graves are opened, the dead are identified, their bones washed and buried again. This causes flash-backs and a retraumatisation for many people. In 2005 several schools had to be closed due to strong reactions of pupils. In memorials thousands of bones are exposed which is for many persons very shocking.

These collective ceremonies do not allow individual mourning. In some cases during commemorations women express their distress and suffering by collective crying. But the culture of commemoration hinders the people to overcome suffering, to take social and psychological space and time to get to rest or to claim the right of repression. For others the ceremonies do not include those who were killed for other reasons than belonging to the Batutsi. They conclude that their dead do not have the right for commemoration. More and more refuse to partake in these ceremonies which cause flash-backs for many of them. In general, people have few possibilities to talk about their experiences, the dehumanization and the loss of human dignity and how to organize live, social relations and economic struggle.

As known from other mortal conflicts many suffer from a survivor complex. They feel as if they do not have the right to live and keep asking "why they and not me?". They feel guilty, which is a hard burden to reconstruct live.

- **The challenge of identity**

Starting in 1990 and due to the war between the Rwandan army and the Rwandan Patriotic Front coming from Uganda a reethnisation of the society was organized by political parties and opinion makers.¹⁸ Since the so-called social revolution in 1959 ethnical attributions were regularly instrumentalised to cover the struggle for political power and economic interests. In 1994 the attributed identity belonging to one of the three social groups lead to a categorization of the population: person A belongs to the Batutsi and is an “enemy of the country” or is supporting the Batutsi or person B belongs to the group of Bahutu, who tries to exterminate the Batutsi. The Batwa population was not targeted but in 1994 a lot of them lost their life.

This construction of identities with the underlying idea that each group is sharing the same interests is a historical invention and seldom was matching with the self definition of the persons. Same interests are based mostly on social, economic or political power than on attribution to a so-called ethnicity. But those who were persecuted since 1959 due to the ethnical attribution of identity are very sensitive in relation to this issue. In general, the “ethnic” topic was a taboo before 1994 even mentioned in identity cards, and access to public employment and schools was ruled by a quota system.¹⁹ In the aftermath of the slaughter this categorization got overwhelming importance. Even today again a taboo the identity to be Rwandan is strongly supported, but obviously it plays an important role joined by other facts like the country from which people are coming, which European language they speak, if they have been in or outside the country before 1994, those who keep power today and returnees from different waves. Several hypothesis of construction of identity are prevailing and self-definition is vague due to common beliefs, traditions and culture of the groups.

- **A culture of silence**

Even before 1994, an important challenge in social and political relations was a “culture of silence” and a “culture of rumours” (Les on-dits et les non-dits). Anxious to mobilize old demons, to hurt others, to be categorized as a group to which people don’t want to belong, a lot of topics are not addressed. Very often victims live side by side with perpetrators or their families. Due to a lack of alternatives people don’t speak about what happened. It would make impossible the fragile living nearby and threaten families of victims.

This situation can not prevent that rumours circulate and - as self-fulfilling prophecies - create new realities. In colonial time this culture of rumours was an important tactic of resisting oppression but also created insecurity and false denunciation. A lot of

“historical imaginations” were mobilized during genocide and can be easily activated again.²⁰

3. The Right to recover the own history as subject and actor

- The stigmatization as victim or as perpetrator

Most of Rwandans consider themselves as being victims, at a socio-psychological level there are no winners, but only victims of perpetrators, victims because of the loss of relatives and friends, victims of indoctrination, victims of “the right of self-defence”, victims of denunciation, victims due to a loss of power etc. To be considered as a victim and to behave as a victim will not create a healthy social situation due to the position of being in defence and often at the same time in aggression towards the other.

The Batutsi population is mostly stigmatized as victims and the Bahutu as perpetrators.²¹ The fact that a lot of families are composed of both groups strongly affects the inner familiar structure and relations and contributes to division and segregation.

It is well known that in conflicts victims can become perpetrators and perpetrators become victims or some are perpetrators and victims. To recognize this ambivalence is difficult to support. An example: The leader of the Interahamwe militia, the most important killers, belonged to the Batutsi. The first persons killed in April 1994 were Bahutu belonging to the government like the Prime Minister Agathe Uwilingiyimana, several ministers and administrative authorities.

Victims are considered as powerless, not able to act, and the perpetrators as protagonists who murdered consciously. But a lot of persons tried to flee, negotiated with the murderers, paid for their life or for their death and to be killed, instead by machete, by gun. Other people resisted during months and defended themselves like the people in Bisesero, but in the end most of them were assassinated.²² Many perpetrators were forced by militias to kill or lacked support from local authorities or the government in resisting. Others were not able to defend their families and relatives under the threat being killed themselves. Many survivors were protected by Bahutu.

Those who returned to Rwanda from long exile have quite different notions of what people staying in Rwanda experienced. Others living since the eighties in foreign countries, having been supported by the former government, have no idea about the political situation in the beginning of the 1990 and the persecution of the Batutsi population inside the country, which were considered as “enemies” and “accomplices”.

Due to the war starting in 1990 about one million persons, belonging to all groups, were internally displaced. Out of this population a big number of militias was recruited who believe that the first aggressor belongs to the Batutsi, coming from exile. Revisionism and negationism and sometimes even justification of genocide are widespread among them. Those who returned after the destruction of the refugee camps in 1996, mostly innocent women and children, are considered as belonging to the perpetrators.

For young people these stereotypes, which prevail in daily life, are hardly to support and are a big burden for transgenerational transmission.

- Traumatisation of victims – traumatisation of perpetrators

Individual and collective traumatisation is an important item of the actual situation. People deal quite differently with their trauma. First, they don't want to be called traumatized. As a lady mentioned: "I know that I'm not normal, but only me, I have the right to say this, not others". The word "traumatized" makes them again victims. Others feel that their status as victims is not recognized which leads to frustration.

Traumatisation has to be considered in the historical context of political and socio-economic structures of power relations. It is a normal reaction to abnormal experiences and conditions. Traumatisation is expressed by quite different reactions. Most Rwandans mobilize an astonishing capacity to organize their life. Related to the big number of persons concerned, very few lost their competencies to deal with daily life. Most Rwandans seem to live a normal life,²³ sharing important experiences of violence, rape, mutilation, loss of relatives and friends, loss of properties and employment and daily presence of murderers.

A lot of people who were targeted do not have the will to live, but continue to "function normally". Many people have the impression that others suffered more than themselves and therefore they have no right to complain, not even to speak on their sufferings.²⁴ But even not spelled out a hierarchy of suffering exists, related to the number of killed relatives, to ethnic attribution, to their former social and political status etc.

The traumatisation of perpetrators or their relatives is actually not a topic in Rwandan society. This causes contradiction, self-doubt and sufferings for children and youth and the next generation.

- The right to suffer

Traditionally Rwandans learned to control their emotions and not to speak about; it was one of the most important values in society.²⁵ Today the right to suffer and to claim

suffering publicly is permitted to those who are considered as victims. But a lot of them have the impression that their sufferings and the lack of respect of human dignity are not really recognized. The denial of genocide is once again a questioning of their belonging to humanity. Most of the survivors of the Batutsi population did not benefit from reparation. A lot have the impression that their life and right to live are not secured. This is confirmed by the assassination of several persons who testified in the agacaca procedures. If a human being, due to the fact of belonging to a social group, has been aggressed and exposed to killing, it is not easy to get rid of the feeling that your basic right for life is not recognized. There is no security and threat is prevailing coming from those who continue to consider the other as an “enemy”.

A lot of those who are not recognized as victims choose the inner exile. They don't allow themselves to express their sufferings seeming in relation to the sufferings of others quite unimportant. How will they deal in the future with this situation? Will it end in aggression or in social isolation one day? These reactions are individual reactions, no ranking or scale to measure the degree of being victim or suffering is possible. A lot of perpetrators are living side by side with their victims; others spend being innocent years in jail. The first step to create a future and to rebuild social relations is the recognition of the sufferings of each other.

- **Several truths**

The perception of the events, of war and genocide, the reasons for this tragedy and the consequences are quite divergent. The interpretation of the historical background of the society as well as the subjective history changed due to genocide. For example, the persecution of the Batutsi population starting in 1959 is perceived as being persecuted since a long time. The objective history shows that this persecution started some decades ago.²⁶ The perpetrators “justify” their action with oppression by the others which lasted five hundred centuries, a result of colonial and Christian writing of Rwandan history which was instrumentalised for a power struggle. The appreciation of economic strengths and development during the 2nd Republic of Rwanda is quite different depending on people living at this time in or outside the country.

Individually, events are quite differently interpreted and are widely inspired by the presentation of socio-political evolution and topics in national and international media even if it is contradictory to their own experiences. To make a difference between historical and subjective truth is quite difficult but helps to reconstruct history. It seems important to analyze the multi-causes of genocide and crimes against humanity, which will take some time.

- **Taking leave of the dead**

Véronique Tadjo's novel "L'ombre d'Imana"²⁷ shows very impressing that in Rwanda the assassinated do not find their rest in peace, because the didn't get a dignified funeral and this causes the unrest of the living. The actual way to commemorate genocide deprives the dead of their dignity and does not allow survivors to say goodbye to their beloved relatives and friends. To take leave is important for mobilizing forces to organize life and to set new objectives. Even twelve years after genocide, some people don't know if friends or relatives are still living, dead or where they are buried. Till now, people discover survivors or get the information that others are dead. This minimizes the will and the capacity to pick up courage for life.

- **Forgiveness and reconciliation**

Young people need to restore confidence in the other, but first in themselves. The destruction which came over them, the fact that they are considered as belonging to a country of killers weak their emotional stability. Most important is to promote the process of healing, to recover the inner peace to become able to deal with others. A young lady said: "The hardest is the inner war I'm carrying on, the most important is to find first my inner peace."²⁸ Children and adolescents in Rwanda are permanently confronted with the past history. They ask questions on the reason of war and genocide, on identity, about their personal and professional future, guilt, responsibility and recognition of unjustness, forgiveness and reconciliation. The latter is far for a lot of people. The question is "Who should reconcile with whom?" on an individual and collective level.

Forgiveness is only possible when the guilt is recognized but this is far for a lot of perpetrators. Many made confessions which are motivated by other reasons than the recognition of guilt, for example to get released from jail. On the other side, the right not to forgive should also be a basic right for victims.

Achieving reconciliation, forgiveness and healing of deep injuries are important. This process will take a long time and should be supported by psychosocial means. Young people underlined that it will take one generation or more to be able to reconcile. Important preconditions for reconciliation are justice and truth.

4. Conclusion: The right for more healthy future

The Rwandan government, with important contributions of international organizations, supports commemoration, memorials and the reconciliation process to overcome the collective traumatisation of the society. But as shown, for a lot of persons it is difficult, due to the prevailing economic and social conditions, to recover from the individual and collective disaster. Even if the political will is to achieve soon reconciliation, on individual level, the healing process takes time. The efforts to reconstruct the country give hope and people are looking forward. On the other side the injuries are not healed. Socio-psychological insecurity and instability continue to affect people.²⁹

It is a challenge to create the future without forgetting the past. For girls, boys, women and men it is important to get space for the reconstruction of their subjectivity, of their status of subjects of their own history. Recover social recognition and status by justice and truth are necessary to gain back, from a total dehumanization, the right to be considered as a human being and to overcome the status of victim.³⁰ To remember can be very useful for healing but sometimes the cutting from the past and sufferings even repression are necessary to address the future. There are a lot of issues which should be clarified, the imaginaries and realities, elements which are constitutive for identities in social context.

An important challenge is a society wide discussion about which norms and values are valid and starting from which cultural patterns they can be recovered or developed? To build new bridges between people, between identities and between social groups, it is primordial to analyze the social and psychological fractures within the society.

Traumatisation does not end with the stop of violence, sometimes years after the traumatizing events it becomes virulent. To life after collapse and recognition or non recognition of injustice and sufferings are determining for the dealing with the destruction of psychological and social structures. A former child-soldier may become a victim under peace conditions because his base of constructing identity was taken off.³¹ Understanding past and present, analyzing processes and the effects of traumatisation and violence on different system levels, recognizing the ambivalence of relations between victims and perpetrators are important for the healing process. The right to commemorate on his or her own manner and the right to refuse forgiveness and reconciliation should be assured.

Physical, social and economic security, psychological stability, justice and reparation help to recover dignity and subjectivity. Individual and collective suffering supports the reconstruction of social life and history and may be central elements to reconstruct a society and the right of difference and the right of life.

Endnotes

- ¹ Even the First and Second World Wars had negative implications especially on the economic situation of the country; in May 1916 the Germans were in Rwanda defeated by Belgian troops, coming from the neighbouring Congo.
- ² Schürings, Hildegard. *Rwandische Zivilisation und christlich-koloniale Herrschaft*. Frankfurt: IKO-Verlag 1992.
- ³ “2. The German and Belgian colonial (trusteeship) policy of indirect rule, favouring the strengthening of Tutsi hegemony and resulting in a political and administrative monopoly in the hands of the aristocratic Tutsi overlords of the Nyiginya clan from the 1920s. Under the influence of the so-called hamitic thesis, this policy culminated in 1933 with the introduction of compulsory identity cards, reinforcing and accelerating the late pre-colonial process towards a separation of Tutsi and Hutu (and Twa). From then on, all Rwandese had to relate to "their" of 1959 respective ethnic group, which in turn determined avenues and fortunes in society. Under European colonialism, a policy of "ethnogenesis" was actively pursued, i.e. a politically-motivated creation of ethnic identities based on socially-constituted categories of the pre-colonial past. The minority Tutsi became the haves and the majority Hutu the have-nots.
3. The abrupt change by Belgium only some 25 years later, when - under the influence of the general decolonization process in Africa, the build-up towards political independence in the Congo (Zaire) and in a belated attempt to redress past injustices - the colonial administration (and the Catholic church) shifted support from the minority Tutsi to the majority Hutu. This eased the way for the so-called peasant, or Hutu, revolution of 1959-61, through which Rwanda underwent a profound transition from a Tutsi-dominated monarchy to a Hutu-led independent republic in less than three years. The replacement of one political elite by another introduced a new dimension of political and social instability and a potential for future ethnic violence. The events -61 also forced tens of thousands of Tutsi into exile in neighbouring countries, from where groups of refugees began to carry out armed incursions into Rwanda, sowing the seeds of the country's ethnically-defined refugee problem.”
IPD, Profile Of Internal Displacement : Rwanda - Compilation of the information available in the Global IDP Database of the Norwegian Refugee Council (as of 29 October, 2004), p.20
- ⁴ Schürings, Hildegard (Ed.). *Ein Volk verlässt sein Land. Krieg und Völkermord in Rwanda*. Köln: Neuer ISP Verlag, 1994.
Guichaoua, André (Ed). *Les crises politiques au Rwanda et au Burundi (1993-1994)*. Université des Sciences et Technologie de Lille. Paris: Karthala, 1995.
- ⁵ Manfred Eisele, former Assistant Secretary General, Department of Peacekeeping Operations of the United Nations on the conference: *Ten years after – Genocide in Rwanda, Ruanda – 1994 bis 2004*, Loccum 5-7.03.2004, Loccumer Protokolle 11/04, 2005, 61-79.
- ⁶ Schuster, Werner. „Tödliche Ignoranz.“ In *Ein Volk verlässt sein Land. Krieg und Völkermord in Ruanda*. Edited by Hildegard Schürings. Köln: Neuer ISP Verlag, 1994, 225-226
- ⁷ Schürings, Hildegard. „Versagen im Angesicht des Völkermords – Die unabhängige Untersuchung zur Verantwortlichkeit der internationalen Gemeinschaft in Rwanda 1994.“ *Vereinte Nationen*, Nr. 2, April 2000.
- ⁸ examples see:
Des Forges, Alison, Human Rights Watch/ Fédération Internationale des Ligues des Droits de l'Homme. *Leave None to tell the Story. Genocide in Rwanda*, 1999, in German: *Kein Zeuge darf überleben – Genozid in Rwanda*. Hamburg: Hamburger Edition, 2002.
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- ⁹ Schürings, Hildegard. „Verdeckte Fronten - Zu den Hintergründen des Konflikts in Ostzaire.“ *Blätter für deutsche und internationale Politik*. Bonn, January 1997, 74-82.
The long march in the forests of Congo, see: Umutesi, Marie-Béatrice. *Fuir ou Mourir au Zaïre – Le vécu d'une Réfugiée Rwandaise*. Paris: L'Harmattan 2000.
- ¹⁰ African Peer Review Mechanism: *Country Review Report of the Republic of Rwanda*. June 2006
- ¹¹ IPD, Profile Of Internal Displacement : Rwanda - Compilation of the information available in the Global IDP Database of the Norwegian Refugee Council (as of 29 October, 2004), p. 20, <http://www.internal-displacement.org/> 18.08.2006
- ¹² data, see: map

[http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/fullMaps_Af.nsf/luFullMap/10A8D0DD553AF839C125706900380B09/\\$File/ocha_AFC_qlr150605.pdf?OpenElement](http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/fullMaps_Af.nsf/luFullMap/10A8D0DD553AF839C125706900380B09/$File/ocha_AFC_qlr150605.pdf?OpenElement), 28.07.2006

¹³ Ministère de la Jeunesse, des Sports et de la Culture, GTZ. *Etre jeune au Rwanda – Enquête sur la situation des jeunes au Rwanda*. Kigali, Rwanda 2003

¹⁴ <http://www.womenwarpeace.org/rwanda/rwanda.htm>, 18.08.2006

¹⁵ Human development index: of 177 States, Rwanda has the 159th rank, UNDP: Human Development Report 2005, www.undp.org 30.07.2006

¹⁶ Myself I listened since 1994 to a lot of persons and most of them confirm that it is the first time that they speak about what they experienced in 1994 and on their actual situation.

¹⁷ In 1959 and in an other persecution period in 1973 churches, monasteries, catholic and protestant schools were a sure haven for those who were persecuted, in 1994 this it was not the case, see: Schürings, 1994 op.cit.

¹⁸ Newspapers and national radio in Rwanda, the media like the worst Radio-Télévision libre des Mille collines - RTLM requested in 1994 the population to “finish the work” (which means to kill the “enemy”) spread out stereotyping figures and information of the population.

¹⁹ In the 1980 the geographical origin was often more important to get access to economic resources than the “ethnic” affiliation.

²⁰ Schürings 1992, op.cit.

²¹ Marie-Aimable Umurerwa describes her experiences as Mututsi and her husband's experiences as Muhutu during genocide and the flight in Congo (former Zaïre). Umurerwa, Marie-Aimable with Patrick May. *Comme la langue entre les dents. Fratricide et Piège identitaire au Rwanda*. Paris : L'Harmattan, 2000.

²² Hatzfeld 2004, op. cit., <http://www.africanrights.org>, 18.08.2006.

²³ Visiting Rwanda, nobody can imagine that in this nice country with a beautiful landscape in three months about one million people were killed mostly by civil persons and that you are walking on graves. Only in 1999 university studies on psychological and social health were established at the National University of Rwanda.

²⁴ In the Rwandan society psychic distress was till 1994 not considered as an illness which can be healed, see conference by Vincent Sezibera, National University of Rwanda, Association des Etudiants en Psychologie Clinique et pour la Santé Mentale - Imbutu, Butare 16.12.2005

²⁵ Schürings 1992, op.cit.

²⁶ Lemarchand, René. “Disconnecting the Threads: Rwanda and the Holocaust Reconsidered.” *History and Prevention of Genocide Symposium 2001*, December 20, 2001, Vol.7, No.1, <http://www.ideajournal.com/articles.php?id=29>, 18.08.2006

²⁷ Tadjó, Véronique. *L'Ombre d'Imana. Voyages jusqu'au bout du Rwanda*. Arles: Actes Sud, 2000. in English: *The Shadow of Imana. Travels in the heart of Rwanda*. Oxford: Heinemann, 2002. African Writers Series. in German: “der schatten gottes - Reise ans Ende Ruandas”. Wuppertal: Peter Hammer Verlag 2001.

²⁸ Imbutu. *Für Frieden und Versöhnung – Jugendbegegnungen in Rwanda*. CD-Rom, Fronhausen 2004, www.imbutu.net

²⁹ Schürings, Hildegard. „Noch keine Versöhnung – Vor zehn Jahren : Völkermord und Verbrechen gegen die Menschlichkeit in Ruanda.“ *Entwicklungspolitik*, 7/2004 April, 26-31.

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See reports of Human Rights Watch: www.hrw.org, International Crisis Group: www.crisisgroup.org, IDP-Norway: www.internal-displacement.org, Amnesty International: www.amnesty.org.

³⁰ See projects of Imbutu 2001-2005 and 2006 “*Learning from experiences – after the Shoa in Europe, after genocide in Rwanda*”. www.imbutu.net.

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