NON-STATE ACTORS AND PEACEBUILDING IN POST-GENOCIDE SOCIETIES: LESSONS FROM RWANDA

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ARTICLE HISTORY	Abstract
	In the year 1994, Rwanda witnessed one of the most brutal episodes of ethnic violence in human history. Interestingly, in the years following the genocide the nation ushered in peace through efforts by political and non-political agencies, founded on the principles of reconciliation and peaceful coexistence. The Rwandan peace-building model presents a unique case as non-state actors, and non-conventional approaches were employed for ensuring justice and peace in a post-genocide scenario. The localised efforts were focused on the deliverance of peace and 'restorative justice', to build the foundations for long-lasting peace and stability. The paper aims to evaluate the role of international, governmental and grassroots level agencies in delivering justice in the post-genocide phase of Rwanda. This paper also aims to examine the role of local actors in peace building and to evaluate the level of its effectiveness in Rwanda.

1. INTRODUCTION

The Rwandan genocide is considered as one of the most brutal cases of ethnic cleansing, resulting in the death of as nearly as 8,00,00 people, including Tutsis and moderate Hutus (Rwanda, n.d.). The resentment between the Hutu and Tutsi tribes had been a major point of dispute in both Rwanda and Burundi, long before the occurrence of

the genocide. The fault lines in the social division in the Rwandan society could be traced back to the pre-colonial times. The origins of both the Hutus and Tutsi are largely contested due to the lack of historical records. As per oral history, the Hutus are believed to have arrived into the region by 1000 AD, while the Tutsis were 'cattle owners' from Southern Ethiopia who migrated to Rwanda by the 14th and 15th century (Menelaou,2022). Traditionally, the Hutus were peasants and formed the demographic majority in Rwanda. The Tutsi minority became the elite in the social hierarchy as they owned the cattle and land required for agriculture. The Tutsis became the propertied class and the Hutus worked on Tutsi-owned agricultural land. The Hutus who were able to acquire cattle were considered eligible to be absorbed into the Tutsi order. The Tutsi rulers devised the Ubuhake, a feudal system or agreement that was formed between the communities. The Hutus could use the cattle owned by the Tutsis in exchange for a supply of personnel to the Tutsi military (East Africa Living Encyclopedia, n.d.). Throughout the pre-colonial years, the economic disparities remained the key point of contention between the two communities, and it also shaped the social dynamics of Rwanda. The issue of this social division was further exacerbated with the arrival of colonial powers to Rwanda. The Germans secured Rwanda as part of German East Africa following the Berlin Conference in 1884 and established their rule over the region by the 1910s. The German colonisers administered their rule to the Tutsi leader Mwami, which would help consolidate their control over the diverse Rwandan population. The German rule in Rwanda was predominant during the 1920s and 1930s. Three major areas, including extensive coffee plantations, collection of taxes and the establishment of religious missions in Rwanda. (East Africa Living Encyclopedia, n.d.). Following the defeat of Germany in World War I, Rwanda was placed under Belgian rule based on the League of Nations mandate system.

During the Belgian rule, the power dynamics in Rwanda were disturbed and the social hierarchy was formed based on 'ethnic categories' (Schliesser,2018). The rulers created separate identification cards, which were allocated to the Rwandans based on their ethnic background. These documents could identify and distinguish the Hutus and Tutsis from one another. In addition, the popular narrative of 'social Darwinism' was also applied to categorise and separate the ethnicity of the Rwandan people. The racial narrative identified the Tutsis as people akin to the 'Hamitic' race and the Hutus as 'Bantus' or 'Negroid' people. The colonisers promoted the Tutsis as the ruling class due to their 'superior race'. These factors enabled the Tutsis to assert their dominance

over the Hutus (Negi,2022). The Tutsi minority gained the social advantage under the colonial rule and remained the ruling class while the Hutus were denied access to education and employment. After years of discrimination under the Belgian rule, the Hutus began to organise efforts for independence by the late 1950s. Rwanda gained independence in 1962 following Hutu rebellion and established a Republican model of governance headed by a Hutu political party. In the post-independence phase, the Hutu national narrative framed the Tutsis as 'colonial sympathisers' and claimed that years of Tutsi rule were the reason for the nation's weak economic condition. The Hutu government used the radio to launch its propaganda under 'Hutu Power' which magnified the effect of the existing discontent. The anti-Tutsi propaganda often led to violent clashes between the Hutus and Tutsis in various parts of Rwanda. Tutsi rebel faction organised to wage guerilla warfare from the Rwanda-Uganda border against the Hutu government in Rwanda, which ended up in the Rwandan Civil War. The large-scale armed conflict was fought between the Rwandan Armed Forces and the Tutsi rebel group, the Rwandan Patriotic Army, that lasted for four years. The Arusha Agreement caused a partial lull to the war but failed to accommodate the differences between the warring factions.

The primary aim of the Arusha Accords was to curb insurgency and guerilla warfare. The Agreement focused on a power-sharing system by clearing a plural democratic system of governance for Rwanda. The Hutus were divided over the Accords as a section of politicians within the ruling government believed that the 'concessions' would reduce their power (Menelaou,2022). Similarly, the Tutsi militia continued its efforts to dethrone the Habyarimana regime. The Tutsis viewed the Accords as a means of appeasing them, maintaining the status quo and thereby shunning the chances for a political transition. The problem of Tutsi refugee return from neighbouring states was also a critical point for mistrust (Nikuze,2014). The deal for a power-sharing system under the Arusha Accords failed largely due to mistrust between the Hutu government of Rwanda and the Tutsi rebels. On 6th April 1994, an airplane carrying President Juvenal Habyarimana was shot down near the Capital city of Kigali. The incident triggered immediate response as anti-Tutsi sentiments spread across the nation. The Interahamwe, a Hutu paramilitary wing, unleashed violence on Tutsis and moderate Hutus, which only ended after three months into the bloodshed. The genocide also resulted in large-scale destruction of property throughout Rwanda. The years following the genocide, from 1995 to 2000, also witnessed minor skirmishes, violent clashes

and insurgency due to general feelings of angst and uncertainty over the future of the Rwandan state (Mwambari, 2018). The war-torn nation required comprehensive means to revive the Rwandan state, heal people from the brunt of the violence and create a future of peace and progress.

2. THE PEACE PROCESS IN RWANDA

The need for a comprehensive peace plan was of paramount importance to Rwanda since the formation of the Republic in 1962. Before its independence in 1962, both Rwanda and Burundi existed as a single state known as 'Burundi-Ruanda' under the League of Nations mandate system. The Hutu-Tutsi sectarian divide persisted in the Great Lakes region, mainly in Rwanda and Burundi, largely due to the states' geographical proximity. The Peace efforts brokered between the Hutus and Tutsis in Rwanda could be classified into two phases: the post-independence phase, and the post-genocide phase. The initial phase of the peace was mainly during the 1980s, as the Tutsi rebellion and guerilla warfare were actively present in the Ugandan region bordering Rwanda. The animosity between the Tutsi rebels and the ruling Hutu government intensified and culminated in the Rwandan Civil War. At the international level, states and international organisations were forced to remain as mere spectators, while the violence unfolded in Rwanda and the Great Lakes region. Following the plea from the leadership in the Great Lakes states, the UN established the United Nations Observer Mission Uganda Rwanda (UNOMUR) at the Rwanda-Uganda border region, to curb the activities of the Tutsi rebel wing known as the Rwandan Patriotic Army (RPA). The UNOMUR was primarily established to prevent the sectarian fighting in the border region. In October 1993, the Security Council Resolution 872 called for the creation of a UN Assistance Mission in Rwanda (UNAMIR) to help in promoting peace, establishing links between the Tutsi rebels and the Hutu government to facilitate the formation of the transitional government, including members from the Tutsi community, in the ministry. The United Nations failed in their attempts to broker peace between the Tutsi rebels and the Hutu government. The extensive deployment of the Peace Keeping Forces to neutralise the warring factions and the peace efforts undertaken by the global players including the United Nations failed to prevent the skirmishes between the Hutu and Tutsi tribes. The Hutu unleashed violent attack against the Tutsis in April 1994, resulting in the death of more than 8,00,000 people.

The UN peacekeepers were also attacked by Hutu militia during the early stages of the

violence and the 'sending states' of the Peace Keeping Force were concerned about the safety of their personnel. In response, the UNSC Resolution 912 reduced the contingent strength of the Rwandan Peacekeeping Mission. In May 1994, weeks after the genocide, the Security Council imposed arms embargo on Rwanda. The UNSC launched the 'Operation Turquoise' following the Resolution 929 to form a 'multinational' operation to provide humanitarian assistance in the affected areas (UNAMIR, n.d.). Apart from the peace efforts, the UNSC Resolution 1325 made a significant contribution by giving opportunity for the women in the reconstruction of post-genocide Rwanda. The resolution also acknowledged the role of women in conflict and used their experiences in the management of the conflict scenario as an essential part of its peace and security mandate (Issifu,2015). However, the legacy of the UN involvement in the region has been a point of debate and is often criticised for its failure in preventing or mitigating the conflict. The departure of the UN forces from the region left the peace process as the sole responsibility of the new Rwandan government.

The critical objective of the administration in its approach towards building a structure for peace, the goal of the State was to promote reconciliation between the Hutu and Tutsi tribes. The government's mission towards peace primarily requires the need to balance the grand notions of 'justice', 'truth' and 'peace' and 'security' (Outreach Programme on the Rwanda Genocide and the United Nations, n.d.). Since peacebuilding is a long process, a stable political environment is inevitable for building 'structures for peace'. In the post-genocide scenario, the administrative machinery of Rwanda was in a state of recovery. New buildings were constructed to house the government offices and various official records and documents were destroyed during the violent clashes.

Before the genocide, the political system in Rwanda was in a state of disarray as the Tutsis were sidelined from political leadership, in response to the discrimination faced by the Hutus under the colonial rule. The role of the new administration following the genocide was not to settle the differences of the past but to promote the idea of a unified Rwandan identity. In this regard, the pre-genocide identification systems based on ethnicity were legally abolished. The official motto of the government "We are all Rwandans", envisaged to promote inclusive growth, peace and progress of the post-genocide Rwanda (Schliesser,2018). After years of ethnic divisions and a brutal genocide, the new Rwandan administration under the leadership of the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) was very much particular in establishing a coalition government.

The coalition government headed by the Rwandan Patriotic Front included other pre-genocide opposition parties and civil society groups in the government, forming a legitimate, non-partisan political leadership (Mwambari, 2021). With the formation of a coalition government, the Rwandan administration implemented various progressive polices and constructive development programs to gain the good will and the trust from all the sections of the public. While most of the policies of the pre-genocide phase were amended, and at the same time, rural people's forums known as the Umuganda were retained. Due consideration was given to accommodate the opinions and suggestions of the public and to settle their grievances, received by the government, from the participatory programs conducted for the public, in this regard. The community interactions through public forums and focus groups facilitated the dialogue and discussions on issues like the 'management of land', 'national identity and unity', 'settlement of returning refugees' and 'the revival of national economy' (Mwambari,2021).

Meanwhile, the UN Security Council established the International Criminal Tribunal of Rwanda (ICTR) in 1994. The Tribunal focused on the role of the judicial process as vital to maximise the potential for peace and reconciliation. Some of the key objectives of the ICTR were "achieving justice", "ending impunity"," promoting national reconciliation", "restoring peace "in Rwanda (Møse, 2015). It focused on crimes falling under the category of direct involvement in acts of genocide. The system also prosecuted individuals responsible for "other serious violations of International Humanitarian Law committed in Rwanda between 1 January and 31 December 1994" (Outreach Programme on the Rwanda Genocide and the United Nations, n.d.). Following the Tribunal, the first phase of the trials began in 1997 and it went on till the early 2000s, with nearly 10,000 individuals tried and was aimed at convicting more serious crimes committed during the peak of the ethnic violence (Schabas,2005). One of the major achievement of the Tribunal was its definition of genocide and the inclusion of rape as an act of genocide. (Rwanda, n.d.). While the ICTR focused on war crimes and crimes that endanger international law, the Rwandan Government established a legal framework to prosecute the perpetrators of crimes, which fall within the framework of its judiciary.

The Western model of liberal peace and justice had its limitations in addressing the unique scenario present in Rwanda. The top-down nature of the peace processes have

been least inclusive of 'subaltern voices' and is often stereotypical of the 'local context'. Hence, the liberal idea of peace and the western notions of international justice might not apply to the Rwandan scenario ("Informal Peacebuilding Initiatives in Africa," n.d.). The ineffectiveness of Western models of peace and justice in Rwanda created the need for formulating a more decentralised approach, departing from its pre-genocide system of centralised governance inherited from the colonial times, mainly under the Belgian rule. The framework of liberal peace in the process of conflict resolution was essentially 'euro-centric' and it failed to address and accommodate the intricacies of the East African nation. Firstly, the Western ideas are based on the principles of freedom and individual rights, while the value system in the region gives more salience to family and kinship. Second, the Hutu-Tutsi issue was mainly an 'intra-state' conflict rather than an 'inter-state' conflict. Similarly, the Rwandan society was composed of multiple ethnicities, unlike the states in Europe. Hence, the ideas suited for the majoritarian democracy of the West could not be applied in Rwanda owing to its troubled history of majoritarian extremism (Hagg and Kagwaja,2007).

3. GACACA COURTS AND GRASSROOTS JUSTICE SYSTEM

In the Rwandan context, establishing a sustained, long-lasting peace could only happen through the delivery of justice to the victims of sectarian violence. The delay in the delivery of justice to victims of the sectarian violence would be a hurdle in heralding the peace process and its effective implementation. The administration was faced with the herculean task of the disposal of the huge number of cases of genocide-related crimes. The crimes of genocide in Rwanda outnumbered the trials that followed the Jewish Holocaust in Nazi Germany. With the existing judicial machinery, it would have taken decades to complete the trials of the war crimes, given the enormity of the number of cases registered. At the same time, the overcrowded prisons were a worry for the administration as the inmates were forced to live in unhygienic conditions and were dying due to communicable diseases.

The administration was forced to incorporate certain traditional social systems to begin the trials of the war crimes. The state brought in various non-state actors including religious institutions, women's organisations and other social initiatives to devise an unconventional method to foster peace, one that suited Rwanda. The Rwandan leadership has been largely critical of the role of Western institutions and their responses in the matters related to peace and justice in the post-genocide period. Therefore, the main

objective of the RPF was to build institutions and strengthen social cohesion in the new Rwanda. The Rwandan Government initiated the National Unity and Reconciliation Commission (NURC) in 1999, with the aim of channelising efforts for unifying the divided society and thereby enabling reconciliation (Vaule,2016). The NURC proposed initiatives to work towards the goal of reconciliation in Rwanda. Some of its key initiatives, which included the Ingando (peace education initiative), Itorero ry'lgihugu (educating Rwandan values), etc. In addition, the NURC undertook measures to train grassroots level leaders, the youth and politicians on policy level matters by organising seminars, national summits and extensive research on best management practices towards the commission's central aim of accommodating unity through reconciliation.

(Outreach Programme on the Rwanda Genocide and the United Nations, n.d.)

However, in the aftermath of the genocide, it was apparent that a sustained peace can only be achieved through peace efforts and the delivery of justice in a bottom-up manner. Another critical issue was the severity of offences committed and the large number of cases. The top-down nature of the legal system caused backlogs in the judicial process. In the post-genocide scenario, the legal framework in Rwanda encompassed three parallel judicial processes, including both at the international and national level. At the International level, war crimes were tried under the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, administered by the UN. The ICTR had its limitations in facilitating the complex scenario faced during the genocide trials. The national government carried out the legal proceeding through the ordinary courts and traditional grassroots legal system known as the Gacaca court to address the 'legal crisis' in post-Genocide Rwanda (Møse,2015). The Gacaca was a legal system under the aegis of the government but functioned in a decentralised manner, intending to guarantee 'transitional' justice. The word Gacaca, which means 'grass' or 'lawn' in Kinyarwanda, the national language of Rwanda, was also symbolic of the grasslands where the trials were held (Schabas,2005). In many ways, the Gacaca was envisioned similar to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission to engage in interactions on past experiences and find means to reconciliation (Longman,2009).

The function of the court draws inspiration from the traditional legal system by the same name and became a distinct model for genocidal trials across the globe. While the former version of the courts discussed land and property disputes at the village level, the newer version was focused on reducing the burden of genocidal crimes at the national

level. The Gacaca also brought about a decentralised nature to the legal machinery in Rwanda, as the trials were held in rural settings with a large group witnessing the court proceedings. Beyond its traditional applicability the new Gacaca courts were able to sentence individuals of crimes and had the provision of reducing the punishment if the accused confess their crimes. These courts aimed to guarantee 'restorative justice' with the ultimate goal of achieving peace and reconciliation rather than punishment and revenge. Based on the nature and degree of the offence, crimes were categorised into four levels:

Category One: This category involved more serious crimes like planning, organising acts of genocide. It also involves instigators supervisors of the genocide and were mainly focused on trying higher political officers and government officials. This category also included sexual offenders.

Category Two: Perpetrators and Murders were placed in this category. It included individuals who killed or caused serious harm to people during genocide.

Category Three: Crimes related to looting and destruction to property were included in this category.

Category Four: Lower degree offences below category three were placed in this category.

(Vaule,2016)

The Gacaca was a 'creative' approach to deal with the legal crisis faced by Rwanda after the genocide. The legal system was rooted in tradition and aimed at a participatory method for delivering 'transitional justice'. The increased participation in the local level trials also increased the accountability and legitimacy of the court, headed by judges known as Inyagamugayo. This system also encouraged the active involvement of women in the justice mechanism, as they were made judges of the courts. The Gacaca at the Sovu province dealt with the maximum number of cases and the proceedings were administered by female judges (Svobodová, 2020).

One of the key advantages of the Gacaca system was the swiftness of the judicial process as nearly 1,958,634 cases of 'alleged' participation was brought before the court. However, many people have been accused of different crimes and the numbers are not exact figures of individuals tried under the system. The National Service of Gacaca

Courts (SNJG) ended the trials by 2012, seven years after its inception (Ingelaere,2014). Over the years, the government brought amendments to the laws on these courts and reduced the number of judges in the Gacaca courts, to have tighter control over the trial process (Longman,2009). The extent of peace and reconciliation generated through the system could only be gauged by understanding the impact of the trials at the grassroots level. The Gacaca system was eventually brought under the state system into a hybrid legal mechanism, transitioning from a bottom-up to a top-down legal body. The courts became both 'producer' and 'product' of the states' power dynamics (Thomson,2011).

During its time, the Gacaca courts have played a significant role in genocidal trials, but are criticised for their lack of sophistication and organisation. The legal system had several demerits in its functioning. Firstly, the court did not facilitate a fair trial to the accused and the categorization of crimes contains ambiguity. Second, a vast majority of the judges were not legal professionals and lacked the formal training and knowledge to handle trials dealing with critical issues linked to the genocide. Third, defendants had no legal counsel and the courts were unable to ensure safety for the witnesses. This could potentially cause harm to themselves as the family of the accused and the witness could be residents of the same neighborhood. Similarly, during the genocide a large majority of Tutsi rebels had also committed war crimes. However, the Tutsi affiliation of the ruling RPF relieved them of facing trials while the Hutus were charged for hate crimes (Longman,2009). The Gacaca courts could be lauded for their effectiveness in carrying out the mammoth task of genocidal trials. The foundational idea of the Gacaca and the legal framework devised by the Rwandan was to present the reality of the conflict to its people and thereby curb and eliminate any threat of violence in the future. The goal of sustained peace and stability in the society required the active involvement of actors outside the purview of the state.

4. THE ROLE OF NON-STATE ACTORS

The post-genocide scenario presented the Rwandan government with several extra-judicial concerns which remained as impediments to its goal of peaceful reconciliation and coexistence. Among the many roadblocks to reconciliation, a large majority of these issues were to be addressed at the individual and societal level. The new government, despite its non-partisan identity, could only act as the facilitator of the process. Issues like trauma healing and communal dialogue required a more specialised involvement. The means to achieving the goal of peace required the need for an active intervention

of unconventional actors to create the ground for reconciliation at the societal level. Indigenous value systems were crucial in laying the foundation for social integration in other parts of Africa, mainly South Africa and Ethiopia. Both states had a history of discrimination and racial violence and therefore employed principles like Ubuntu and Omoro Gadaa to improve social cohesion and coexistence. In South Africa, Ubuntu became the dominant philosophy in addressing the political context following the end of the apartheid rule. In Ethiopia, the Gadaa system combined a 'proactive 'approach with values towards building peace, which is workable even in a modern conflict scenario. In this system, peace is facilitated through parameters or values like 'safuu'(morality), 'equality', 'respect', 'tolerance', and 'law and order' (Debissa,2022). While indigenous traditions and value systems were significant in the social system in the region, the arrival of Christian missionaries partly affected the social dynamics of the society. In Rwanda, the Christian faith served as a bridge between the two communities even when internal differences existed in the pre-genocide phase.

5. RELIGION AND FAITH-BASED ORGANISATIONS

Religion has played a paramount role in Rwanda, both before and after the genocide. During the colonial times, they remained as the factor for unifying various indigenous groups and integrating them into a unified society. During its time under the German rule, the White Fathers missionaries arrived in Rwanda. The mission established Churches, schools and other institutions and has been present since they arrived in 1903 (East Africa Living Encyclopaedia, n.d.). Religion also guaranteed the colonisers the 'social' immunity and legitimacy to work among the common populace. It served as a much stronger value system than the native beliefs to influence the Rwandan people. Rwanda had remained religiously 'homogenous' throughout history, strongly adhering to its Christian faith. Nearly 90 percent of the nation's population were Christians belonging to different sects (Vaule,2016). Similarly, the affiliation to the Church meant more upward mobility in terms of political positions. Catholicism is the predominant denomination in Rwanda and the number of believers increased even after independence and reached about 65 per cent of the total population by the 1990s. This was largely to the close ties between the state and the Church during the pre-independence years (Schliesser,2018). However, the Church was unable to curb the genocidal tendencies within the Rwandan society. Many Churches and faith based organisations acted as safe havens for the Tutsi and moderate Hutus fearing attack.

In the post-genocide scenario, Non-Governmental Organisations(NGOs) linked with religion like the Prison Fellowship International also play an active role in Rwanda. The Prison Fellowship Rwanda engaged in facilitating interactions between prisoners, creating space for dialogue between the 'perpreatators' and the 'survivors' and conduct therapeutic socio therapy sessions in prisons across. The organisation is also involved in providing healing sessions to the inmates through an initiative called the Sycamore Tree Project, Ubumwe restoration etc. (Peacebuilding and Reconciliation, 2022). The role of faith-based organisations had far-reaching effects in terms of trauma healing and forgiveness. This was due to the critical role played by the Church in the lives of the Rwandan people following the genocide, as more people turned to faith to seek solace.

6. WOMEN AND PEACE

In the Rwandan conflict, similar to most ethnic conflicts, the women and the children were subject to violence while the men were involved in violent combat. The brutality of the genocide resulted in rape and serious physical harm for a large group of women. Approximately 2,50,000 women and girls were subjected to sexual violence and nearly 66 per cent of the victims tested positive for HIV/AIDS (Mansab,2023). The 'gender' factor became predominant in the social-economic and policy-making spheres. The significant presence of women in the political leadership coupled with the civil engagement of women's organisations at the grassroots level helped the movement become an effective means to address various concerns in the post-genocide scenario. Women became active agents in the reconstruction of the Rwandan society, making considerable contributions at the societal level and acting as active stakeholders in the socio-political institutions. Issifu (2015) identifies five major areas where the engagement of Rwandan women was significant, which included activism and advocacy for peace, peacekeeping and aid work, community mediation, policymaking, educating and leading participants to engage in socio-political development. Firstly, the women were involved in activism and advocacy for peace initiatives within the society. They also worked towards enhancing peacekeeping measures and were also employed as aid workers. At the local level, the women acted as 'community mediators' known as the Abuzi. At the higher political level, the women occupied the majority stake in policy making for political affairs, thereby improving the scope for including more pro-women policies at the national level. The women were also instrumental in

sensitising the public on the need for cooperation in the path towards socio-economic progress. The Imidugudu (resettlement) was a nationwide program championed by the Rwandan women and provided both labour and also engaged in decision making for the construction programs (Issifu,2015).

Women were sidelined from mainstream politics and were only brought to the forefront after the genocide. Despite the national government being headed by a Tutsi party, female representatives from both Hutu and Tutsi ethnic background were in the parliament (Svobodová, 2020). Currently, Rwanda houses the highest number of female Parliamentarians in the world, with 63.75 per cent strength in the Chamber of Deputies and 53.8 per cent of the total seats in the Senate (Women Representation, n.d.). At the National level, the female presence in the leadership ensured that the National Action Plan included the Security Council Resolution 1325 as a vital element within its scope to counter gender based violence (Mwambari, 2018). The focus on the resolution lasted only for a short duration and could be attributed to the global focus on the issue of terrorism. This hampered the progress achieved on matters related to peace and security issues linked to gender based violence globally (Issifu,2015).

Apart from female leadership in politics, female involvement in the civil society initiatives was also instrumental in administering welfare-oriented practices, in a society healing from the misery caused by conflict. The Pro-femme, also known as the Twese Hamwe, played a significant role in bringing together nearly 60 organisations within Rwanda to work towards both women-centric programs and engage in communal dialogue. These organisations also provided legal knowledge to women who acted as judges and witnesses at local Gacaca courts. Through informal civic networks, several women acted as caretakers, providing shelter and education to children orphaned in the conflict. Many of these women and children had lost their family in the violence, and this act helped them in building trust and trauma healing. Rwanda's youth was taught about the genocide to sensitise them on the need to combat the elements that disturbed peace and social harmony. (Mwambari, 2018)

During the early phase of its reorganisation, the Government of Rwanda acknowledged the role of its women in engaging in activities to mitigate the threat of violence. The government integrated the quintessential role of women in the government bodies due to several reasons. Firstly, the female population of Rwanda was relatively high compared to that of the male population, during the early years after the genocide

and the need for active participation of women was inevitable. Women were proactive in finding a lasting solution to fighting, as most of their male family members were engaged in combat. They were able to convince their relatives to return home from fighting. Similarly, women acted as 'informers' during the internal strife. During the early phase, they passed on strategic information from official sources to rebel groups engaged in guerrilla warfare. However, in the later stages the RPF government promised incentives, including household supplies and essential goods in return for information and eventually suppressed the insurgency (Iloh,2019). The increased representation of women in the political sphere empowered the role of an average Rwandan woman in peace building. Since women are the most vulnerable to any form of political and ethnic conflict, the 'gender' imperative adopted by the lawmakers enhanced the scope for gender sensitive policy making at all levels. These factors influenced changes like equal property rights for men and women, increased involvement of women in civic spaces and reduced the threat of violence.

7. MEDIA, ARTS AND SPORTS

Both religious and women's organisations employed an institutionalised approach towards building peace and trauma healing. In addition to the strategies adopted by these organisations, emotive and symbolic means were also necessary to establish firmer inter-personal communication and enable communal dialogue. Radio communication and theatre had played a vital role in the process of awareness, acting as channels for social communication by increasing civic engagement. Before the genocide, the majority Hutu population launched the 'Hutu Power' campaign through the Radio Television Libre des Mille Collines, as the radio network acted as a tool for anti-Tutsi propaganda. In the aftermath of the conflict, a network of community radio stations along with Radio Rwanda launched programs to facilitate peace and reconciliation. A widely popular radio drama Shirimpumu, which means minds and hearts in Kinyarwanda, was aimed to sensitise the public on the need for unity and reconciliation (Hilditch, 2022).

In addition, Peace and theatre activists formed a network of local, participatory theatre with goal of creating a safe and neutral environment for art and civic engagement called 'aesthetic spaces'. In the aftermath of the genocide, these spaces were formed to organise theatric performances that discussed the diverse experiences faced by its participants during the genocide. The organisers and participants devised certain techniques during the performances to give a broader context and deeper understanding

of indivuals experiences. The techniques included 'role-reversal', 'mirroring', 'hot seating'and 'symbolism and distancing'in performance. By role reversal, the participants consciously reversed characters within the drama to understand the personal experience of the 'other'. The 'mirroring' method employed the usage of body, voice, mannerisms and expressions to convey messages and reenact a situation from the conflict plot. The 'hot seating' method focuses on interviewing perpetrators in safe spaces to gain deeper insights on the motive behind the act of crimes during the genocide. Symbols and metaphors were used in scenarios when sensitive issues were being discussed. These theatric spaces evolved a creative zone for people to interact, educate and socialise safely and neutrally in the post conflict context ("Informal Peacebuilding Initiatives in Africa," n.d.).

Similar to the role played by art, Sports were also able to play an integral role as a symbol of cooperation and hope, mainly football and cricket. In post-apartheid South Africa, the leadership under Nelson Mandela identified the influence of Rugby in the society and how it had been a symbol of racial discrimination. In 1995, South Africa became the host and winners of the Rugby World Cup, as the South African national rugby team, known as the Springboks, were able to bring a divided nation together. Cricket was a product of the genocide as the sport was brought into Rwanda by the returning refugees. The nation launched its first International Cricket stadium in 2017. In the recent years, Rwanda has been able to make remarkable progress in the game, with the national under-19 women's team qualifying for the World Cup in 2023.

The role of the non-state actors, mostly functioning at the grassroots, laid the foundation for the nation's aspirations towards long lasting peace. These agencies were able to create the common ground, while the state provided the organisational structure to coordinate the activities of these organisations. The non-conventional approach has helped delegate the functions of the state, localise efforts for integration and thereby build a consolidated structure for peaceful coexistence.

8. THE RWANDAN MODEL: CRITICAL EVALUATION

The most significant successes of the Rwandan model of peace has been its ability to reintegrate the Rwandan society and also to educate the masses of the perils of conflict and violence. From its very inception, the administration had focused on creating a unique identity for all Rwandans irrespective of their ethnic backgrounds

and past experiences. The creation of a singular national identity combined with its strong adherence to the Christian faith enabled the 'unification' of the Rwandan people in fostering peace and reconciliation. The 'oneness' in terms of culture and the creation of a sense of unity was essential for the government to gain control over the individuals and institutions for enhancing peace and progress in a state recovering from conflict. The Rwanda Reconciliation Barometer brought out by the National Unity and Reconciliation Commission projects decrease in genocide ideology and divisive politics among the Rwandan citizens to 8.6 percent in 2020. It shows a downward trend and sharp reduction from the 25.8 percent reported in 2015 and the 31.5 percent in 2010 (Peacebuilding and Reconciliation, 2022). Rwanda has been able to achieve this largely due to the government involvement in welfare oriented, poverty alleviation programs even at the local level. According to the World Bank the Rwandan economy utilises 6.41 per cent of its GDP on medical and healthcare expenditure, higher than the regional average of 4.98 per cent. At the local level, the government introduced the Girinka campaign or 'One cow per family' program, that aims to generate income and improve nutrition (BTI 2024 Rwanda Country Report, n.d.). Beyond the institutional involvement in peace and reconciliation, initiatives at the grassroots and societal level paved the way for a sustainable model of peace. The decentralisation of legal administration, promotion of women's status and the inclusion of creative means towards peace presents the Rwandan case as a successful model in post-conflict recovery.

However, over the years the Rwandan model tends to exhibit inconsistency in terms of its progressive outlook as projected by its leadership. Various international organisations have raised concerns over the lack of human rights and political freedom in Rwanda. The first post-genocide government gained power in Rwanda in 1994 and is often criticised for imposing the 'victor's justice' in its conduct of state affairs. The RPF won the first election following genocide in 2003 and has remained in power ever since. At the national level, the power stability has been able to aid the steadfast delivery of services and policy implementation, but the governance tends to exhibit signs of a 'one-party' system. The RPF government employs anti-Hutu narrative alleging the Republican Democratic Movement (MDR) Party of continuing to spread 'genocidal ideology' (Vaule,2016). In the initial years the RPF worked in coalition based environment but have introduced control and limitations on the activities of other political organisations. The government launched the National Consultative Forum of Political Organisations,

a government body that regulates the activity of political parties within Rwanda. The political leadership in Rwanda also tends to 'sit-tight' as President Paul Kagame has remained in power since 2000, by introducing a constitutional amendment which extends his tenure to 2034. Rwanda has been engaged in the regional conflicts, with the government involved in the civil war in the Democratic Republic of Congo. These factors have partially affected the image of Rwanda's progressive image globally.

9. CONCLUSION

The localised nature of Rwanda's peacebuilding measures presents an exemplary model for mitigating ethnic conflicts around the globe. The model employed a bottom-up approach to deal with critical concerns related to peace and reconciliation. The political leadership along with other institutions were effective in identifying and addressing the issues which were culturally unique to the Rwandan context. The homogeneity in faith and the political stability in the domestic political scenario provided the reintegration process and the adequate organisational and political will to achieve its goal of peace and reconciliation. The inclusion of the Gacaca courts, and female and youth participation in the decision-making process were all crucial in building confidence. Popular participation in political affairs was able to foster a channel for dialogue in a divided society. Several non-conventional approaches have also been able to bridge the gap in the society further. In recent years, the leadership in Rwanda has come under criticism for its domestic policies and alleged involvement in regional conflicts. Critics have also termed the present condition in Rwanda as a form of 'fragile peace'. However, Rwanda has been able to sustain peace over the years, in the aftermath of a brutal genocide. The post-genocide recovery of Rwanda remains an inspiring model for states recovering from ethnic conflict.

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