



Sahel and West Africa Club/OECD &  
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## LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE POST-CONFLICT RECONSTRUCTION IN RWANDA

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The coup by the FPR and the forming of a government in July 1994 on the basis of the Arusha Agreement marked the end of the genocide of Tutsis but not the end of conflict. The country continued to face aggressive acts within its borders while participating in a war beyond its borders.

However, the end of the genocide was followed by a post-crisis period. Although the government was formed, the challenges of rebuilding and restoring State authority were enormous.

- Approximately 12 % of the 7.000.000 (pre-genocide) inhabitants perished;
- The conflict resulted in 2 million displaced persons;
- 2 million other Rwandans sought refuge in neighbouring countries, throughout Africa and the world;
- 120,000 people were held in country-run prisons;
- Thousands of people suffered physical or mental traumas related to the genocide;
- Women were raped and infected with HIV/AIDS, leaving thousands of widowers and orphans;
- 80 % of the surviving children witnessed the carnage.

Reconstruction in this context signified clear options for Rwanda that should simultaneously and cumulatively strengthen the momentum towards peace, stability and development. Thus, Rwanda chose to:

- ✓ Assure its internal and external security;
- ✓ Guarantee responsible governance and everyone's participation;
- ✓ Assure repairable, reconcilable justice, promote human rights and fight impunity;
- ✓ Rely on humanitarian aid for social and economic development;
- ✓ Mobilise all types of resources;
- ✓ Strengthen socio-economic power and policies regarding women.

On this basis, Rwanda formulated a clear reconstruction policy relying on the recuperation of human capital to bring all Rwandans together to rebuild the country. This was a tremendous gamble following a genocide that shredded the entire social fabric.

✓ **Assure its internal and external security**

- Reduce the last pockets of resistance of the Ex-FAR and Interahamwe. In 2002, internal security was totally assured. Externally, Hutu guerrillas continued to launch attacks on Rwanda from the Congo. Rwanda then decided to occupy the east of the Congo in order to keep the war on the outside of its borders.

✓ **Guarantee responsible governance and everyone's participation**

- After having secured the country within its borders, elections were organised in 2003:
  - Adoption of the Constitution by referendum in May;
  - Universal suffrage presidential election suffrage in August;
  - Universal suffrage legislative elections in October.

The basics of a credible State governed according to the rule of law were set out (civil society, relatively independent press, etc.).

✓ **Assure repairable, reconcilable justice, promote human rights and fight impunity**

- Three legal instruments worked together complementarily in order to reduce Tutsi genocide-related disputes from 1994. This involved the International Penal Tribunal for Rwanda<sup>1</sup> (IPTR), of Rwanda's classic legal system and traditional jurisdictions, Gacaca. In this quest for justice and peace, Rwanda supported the functioning of three legal instruments.

- The International Penal Tribunal for Rwanda (IPTR) was established by a resolution of the United Nations Security Council, Resolution 955 of 8 November 1994.

- Rwanda's classic legal system, destroyed by the genocide was being rebuilt, because the country's 20 magistrates could not handle the 120 000 detainees awaiting judgement in the country's prisons. In addition, nothing in Rwandan legislation sanctioned the genocide. Rwanda also voted in the State law of 30 August 1996 which organised the repression of genocide "crimes of genocide and massacres."

- The creation of Gacaca indicates the Rwanda Government's desire to speed up the dispute resolution process. Thus, the State law Nr :40/2000 of 26 January 2001 creating "Gacaca Jurisdictions" and the prosecution of genocide crimes against humanity committed between 1 October 1990 and 31 December 1994 was adopted by the Rwandan General Assembly. This momentum was supported by a national reconciliation policy based on determining the actual facts, taking responsibility and instituting national pardons.

Along with this, the State established education programmes regarding responsible citizenship and the promotion of human rights.

Great importance was given to compiling recollections because the genocide should not be forgotten. This involves ceasing negation and trivialisation, and remembering without stress or guilty consciences of this collective abuse through memorials, commemorations, education programmes, the taking into account this historical period in this country's past, etc.

✓ **Rely on humanitarian aid for social and economic development**

- Humanitarian aid was essential in Rwanda as it should support and provide the basis for reconstruction. Taking care of refugees, displaced and traumatised persons, prisoners, HIV/AIDS victims, widows, orphans and the reintegration of demobilised combatants, etc. is a tremendous undertaking. The State should be prepared to take on the progressive transfer from humanitarian organisations.

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<sup>1</sup> Tribunal Pénal International pour le Rwanda (TPIR)

Along with this, social dialogue and peaceful co-existence should be undertaken to move slowly towards forgiveness and reconciliation. Land, as a delicate issue, should be approached lucidly. Parliament has stumbled over the land code issue for a long time.

✓ **Mobilise all types of resources**

- Rwandans placed a great deal of hope on the Geneva Roundtable for financing the country's reconstruction. Their hopes were dashed; the spirit of humanitarian solidarity exhibited at the end of the genocide subsided when it came to financing sustainable post-conflict reconstruction programmes. First, relying on one's own resources is essential. In that, the Rwandan diaspora was greatly mobilised with regard to the country's reconstruction. The 2003 electoral consultations could not have taken place with financing from Rwandans themselves. Faced with these difficulties, the country opted for an opportunistic partnership policy. In order to have access to private funds, Rwanda decided to convince investors of its stability and its management and policy to attract investment. It should be emphasised that African (South Africa, Kenya, Nigeria, etc.) as well as Asian (Cambodia, India, etc.) solidarity played an important role.

✓ **Strengthen socio-economic power and policies regarding women**

- Killed during the genocide, imprisoned, involved in the rebellion to the east of the DRC, refugees or exiles, men had deserted the development path in Rwanda. Women's participation in the country's reconstruction was strongly supported by the government. They were present at every level of development activities: picking up trash, maintaining gardens and public buildings, security, business management, etc. 49% of the Rwandan Parliament are women deputies and there is a large proportion of women senators and ministers. This makes Rwanda the country with the greatest female political participation in the world.

This post-conflict reconstruction policy that Rwanda has set up to progressively achieve its vision by 2020 is based on the following pillars:

1. Construction of the nation and its social capital;
2. Development of a credible State effectively governed by the rule of law;
3. Development of human resources so that Rwanda may prosper economically based on knowledge and know-how;
4. Development and entrepreneurship of the private sector;
5. Development of basic infrastructure including urban planning;
6. Modernisation of agriculture and livestock sectors.

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