

# CHILDREN, YOUTH AND GENDER IN RWANDA CONTEXT

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# HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

- 1935: introduction of an identity card with ethnical mention by Belgian Administration
  - People who possessed more than 10 cows were identified as “*Tutsi*” while those with less than 10 cows were identified as “*Hutu*”
- 1959: first massive killing of “*Tutsi*” by “*Hutu*”
  - Most of the survivors went to exile in neighbour countries, namely Burundi, Congo (current DRC), Uganda, Tanzania, and elsewhere across the World

## HISTORICAL BACKGROUND (Cont)

- July 1<sup>st</sup>, 1962: independence of Rwanda and a *Hutu* became the first President (Gregoire Kayibanda)
- 1963-1966, *Tutsi* refugees tried to come back home by force without success
  - There were victims among the *Tutsi* who remained in the country every time the refugees attacked Rwanda
- July 5<sup>th</sup>, 1973: military push which brought Major General Juvenal Habyarimana at the presidential position
  - New massive killing of “*Tutsi*”
  - New movement of refugees

## HISTORICAL BACKGROUND (Cont)

- July 5<sup>th</sup>, 1975: Habyarimana's political party "MRND" was created
  - Every Rwandan was "*de facto*" member of the party
- December 20, 1978: a new Constitution prohibiting other political parties
- 1979: Rwandan refugees created RANU (Alliance for National Unity)
- 1987: RANU became RPF (Rwandese Patriotic Front)

## HISTORICAL BACKGROUND (Cont)

- October 1<sup>st</sup>, 1990, RPA (military branch of RPF) attacked Rwanda from Uganda
- June 1991: a new Constitution which allows multi-parties
- August 4<sup>th</sup>, 1993: Arusha Peace Agreement between RPF and Rwandan Government with four pillars:
  - Establishment of Rule of Law
  - Sharing the Power
  - Establishment of one National Army which includes soldiers from both sides (RPA & Government Army)
  - Return and reinstallation of refugees as well as internal displaced people (refugees were estimated to 2 millions)

## HISTORICAL BACKGROUND (Cont)

- Arusha Peace Agreement did not come into force
- The war between RPA and the Government Army recommenced and then new round of negotiations
  - The Government Army was supported by the militia *Interahamwe* from different political parties
- March 6<sup>th</sup>, 1994: President Habyarimana's assassinate and beginning of genocide of *Tutsi* as well as *Hutu* opposed to divisionist ideology
- July 4<sup>th</sup>, 1994: RPA gained the military war and stopped the genocide
- New movement of refugees, including militia and soldiers of former Government Army, particularly to DRC (they were estimated to 3 millions)

## HISTORICAL BACKGROUND (Cont)

- November 1995: UN Security Council created an ad hoc tribunal to prosecute authors of genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity committed between October 1<sup>st</sup> 1990 and December 31<sup>st</sup> 1994 (ICTR)
- 1996-2000: attack of Rwanda by the soldiers of former Government Army and militia *Interahamwe* from DRC
- Up to now, there are many Rwandan refugees either in RDC or other countries

# THE CONSEQUENCES OF THE WAR AND THE GENOCIDE ON CHILDREN

- As victims, thousands of children have been:
  - Killed/wounded
  - Enrolled in the armed forces and militia as combatants
  - Forced by adult persons to commit acts of genocide
  - Orphans, separated with parents/relatives or abandoned (in 1994, they were estimated at 400.000)

# THE CONSEQUENCES OF THE WAR AND THE GENOCIDE ON CHILDREN (CONT.)

- Displaced or forced to exile
- Raped and/or sexually abused/infected with HIV
- Traumatized
- Responsible for their young brothers and sisters (children heading households)
- Mistreated by foster families
- Exposed to a cycle of violence because of the circumstance under which they were born (e.g. children of rape estimated at 5.000)
- As witnesses, children have seen:
  - Their parents/relatives being killed
  - Their mothers and/or sisters being raped
  - Children using arms to kill other children

# THE CONSEQUENCES OF THE WAR AND THE GENOCIDE ON CHILDREN (CONT.)

- Adult persons killing babies and young adolescents
- Massive killing in refugees camps
- Cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment inflicted on babies and young adolescents by adult persons
- As perpetrators, children:
  - Are detainees (in 2006, the National Human Rights Commission listed a total of 1.361 children in prison 525 among them were accused of genocide)
  - Some children are detained in the same prison cells with adults
  - Ignore criminal judicial procedures
  - Have no legal representation

# GENDER ISSUES

- Girls and boys were affected differently by the war and the genocide:
  - Most of the soldiers were recruited among the boys
  - Few girls recruited in armed forces did not take direct part in the fighting as much as the boys; they took care of soldiers by providing nursing care, cooking and especially by satisfying their sexual appetites
  - During the genocide, boys were more targeted by the killers, while the girls were sometimes saved to serve as sexual hostages.

# GENDER ISSUES (CONT.)

- Girls heading households are often abused by adults men who take advantage of their vulnerable status, this leads to a cycle of violence (unwanted children, infection to HIV, drop out school, street children...)
- Forced and earlier marriage

# THE ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF CHILDREN DURING THE RECONCILIATION PROCESS

- Children have shown exceptional courage and solidarity by taking on the heavy burden of younger brothers and sisters
- Children raised voices to say “NO” to ethnical division (e.g. Nyange case)
- Children appealed to adults for peace and tolerance through songs and drama
- Children created youth associations as well as unity and reconciliation clubs
- At schools, some young adolescent give support to their classmates by sharing school materials

# THE ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF CHILDREN DURING THE RECONCILIATION PROCESS (CONT.)

- They participated in building houses for vulnerable widows and/or orphans
- They support each other during memorial period where most survivors of genocide are traumatised

# KEY INITIATIVES/ACHIEVEMENTS TO COMPLY WITH INTERNATIONAL STANDARD

- Rwanda ratified almost conventions on children's rights
- Tracing and fostering of orphans and unaccompanied children programme
- 1996: law prosecuting perpetrators of genocide (the authors of rape are classified in the first category)
- 1996: new identity card with no ethnical mention
- 1998: creation of a Fund for Assistance of vulnerable survivors of genocide, 5 % of the national budget are allocated to the Fund. Main focus: education, medical care and shelter

# KEY INITIATIVES/ACHIEVEMENTS TO COMPLY WITH INTERNATIONAL STANDARD (CONT.)

- 1999: creation of National Human Rights Commission
- 1999: creation of National Unity and Reconciliation Commission
- 1999: law on inheritance which provides equal rights to boys and girls
- 2001: law on children's rights and their protection against violence which increased penalties against perpetrators of rape and sexual abuse towards children
- 2001: Gacaca jurisdictions

# KEY INITIATIVES/ACHIEVEMENTS TO COMPLY WITH INTERNATIONAL STANDARD (CONT.)

- 2001: National Examination Commission which provides equal opportunities for all children to access to education
- 2003: National policy on orphans and other vulnerable children
- 2007: a five years national strategic plan (2007-2011) for orphans and other vulnerable children
- 2005: law on land (equal rights to boys and girls)
- 2006: institutionalisation of community medical insurance scheme (mutuelles de sante)

# KEY INITIATIVES/ACHIEVEMENTS TO COMPLY WITH INTERNATIONAL STANDARD (CONT.)

- Release of detainees children who were under 14 years old during the genocide
- Demobilisation of all children soldiers
- Institutionalisation of “*Ingando*” (non formal education approach) since 1999
- Organising National Forum of children (Sommet des enfants), since 2004

# MAIN CHALLENGES/CONSTRAINTS

- Children accused of genocide who are detained for a long time without judgement
- Legal representation of accused children
- Cases of rape and sexual violence under Gacaca jurisdictions and ICTR
- Economic support to children heading households
- Psychological support to vulnerable children
- Prosecution of authors of war crimes and crimes against humanity
- Reparation of victims of genocide and war crimes

## MAIN CHALLENGES/CONSTRAINTS (CONT.)

- Increase of street children
- Implementation of child friendly laws
- Gender Based Violence in and around schools environment leads to drop out, particularly among girls
- Increase of orphans because of HIV/AIDS

## CHALLENGES/CONSTRAINTS (CONT.)

- As per a new study financed by UNICEF (June 11<sup>th</sup>, 2008), out of a population of 3.4 millions children:
  - 825.000 are orphaned
  - 2 millions are vulnerable
  - Over 86% live on less than a dollar a day
  - Many have very little or no education
  - Close to 200.000 children live in child headed households
  - 22% of orphans have been orphaned due to AIDS
  - At least a third of all orphaned or vulnerable children provide so much labour to household activities and this interferes to their ability to go to school
  - Care giving households for orphans and vulnerable children tend to be poorer

# KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

- Ensure that the rights of the child are observed in all circumstances and step up action in the community to raise and build awareness of those rights
- Ensure the information is disseminated on national and international instruments on the rights of the child
- Prevent any other conflict that could affect the effective exercise of the rights of the child
- Prosecute and punish the perpetrators of war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide wherever they may be

## KEY RECOMMENDATIONS (CONT.)

- Provide special protection for children in difficult situations such as ex-combatants, children heads of households, children in foster families, young girls victims of rape and sexual abuse, children infected/affected by HIV/AIDS, children detainees, street children, traumatised children, displaced/refugees children...
- Provide for a system do coordinate actions in favour of orphans and other vulnerable children in order to avoid dissipating efforts and duplicating assistance

## KEY RECOMMENDATIONS (CONT.)

- Invest more in multi-sectoral assistance (psychological, social, medical, economic and legal) in favour of orphans and other vulnerable children



**THANKS**

