BUILDING IDEALS OF PEACE AND SECURITY¹ IN THE EDUCATED YOUTH FOR A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE: A CASE OF YOUTH STUDENTS AT UMUTARA POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE AND RUKARA COLLEGE IN RWANDA

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Abstract: After 19 years of Rwandan genocide against the Tutsi, Rwandan government still strives towards building a sustainable future. The holistic process requires institutionalization of good governance that embodies democracy, promotion of rule of law, transparency, accountability and good service delivery. Rwandan values, attitudes and modes of behaviour that promotes non-violence and respect for fundamental human rights are vital.

Since 1959, the youth have been victims of Rwandan post-independence political governance that culminated into the Tutsi genocide of 1994 (Destexhe, 1995). Post-genocide challenges like poverty, donor community’s double standards, on-going genocide ideology by genocide perpetrators especially in developed countries and inefficiencies in international justice system (Rutembesa, 2009), remain a challenge.

This article analyses how the government is promoting the ideals of building sustainable peace amongst the youth, in the post genocide era. The main focus is on how the youth is engaged in finding national solutions to national problems, their role in legitimizing politics and how they deal with double standards in global system, which is a major constraint for self reliance on the African continent. Study research methods include: desk research, interviews and public-engaged discussions.

Key words: Ideals, peace, security, educated youth, sustainable future.

I. Introduction and Context

Building ideals of sustainable peace and security requires institutionalization of good governance that embodies democracy, promotion of rule of law, transparency, accountability and good service delivery, among others. In addition, emphasis on values, attitudes and modes of behaviour that promotes non-violence and respect for fundamental human rights, remains an important asset throughout the whole process. Above all, building strong state institutions is critical as well as revisiting the constitution that was in existence when the conflict erupted. This allows for a constitutional and legal framework that reflects interest of everybody and a collective ownership of the holistic process.

The educated and uneducated youths have been both engaged in fuelling conflicts and peacebuilding initiatives in their respective countries, Rwanda inclusive. Various scholars have been largely focusing on why such youths do engage or participate in different violent conflicts (Wallensteen, P., 2002; Larssen, I., 2009 & Ho-Won, J., 2005). On the other hand, some contemporary peace and conflict scholars have been researching on how the youths have become catalysts of building sustainable peace and security in their respective post-conflict societies (Molenaar, A., 2005; Shyaka, A., 2007).

This is why the recognition of efforts by individuals, organizations and governments to end conflicts through the promotion of sustainable peace, is not questionable across the globe (Stephan, 2002). In this perspective, both formal and informal peace education mechanisms play a leading role in promoting the ideals of sustainable peace and security in post conflict societies. It can only be achievable when countries use both top-down and bottom-up approaches of peacebuilding (Ramsbotham et al., 2000; Lederach, 1997).

Contextualizing the above arguments in the Rwandan context and history, Rwanda is a post genocide country whereby over one million Tutsis and moderate Hutus were slaughtered by their fellow countrymen (Hutus). The youths had a first-hand account in implementing the genocide ideology and the genocide itself. The post-

¹ The concept of security in this contemporary world has got different meanings, different from its classical definitions from 17th – 19th centuries. In this paper, its definition entails major components of security like political security; economic and social security, cultural security and environmental security.
genocide experiences have shown that both survivors and perpetrators of the genocide are increasingly becoming victims of the history in a psychological context (Rutembesa, 2009). Consequently, it has become a real challenge for building ideals for peace and security amongst Rwandan youth and young generation towards a sustainable future. On the other hand, it is increasingly becoming a constraint for the reconciliation process in the post genocide era.

A History of Emotional and Physical Scars
Since 1959, the youth have been primary victims of Rwandan post-independence political governance that culminated into the Tutsi genocide of 1994 (Destexhe, A., 1995). The accumulated effects ranged from economic, political, social and psychological factors, especially the deep emotional and physical scars resulting from the post genocide traumatic era and life challenging experiences, like poverty, lack of accommodation to some, on-going genocide ideology, inefficiencies of ICTR (Rutembesa, 2009), to mention but a few. As a result, to some extent all this negatively affects citizen political and civil participation across a section of the youth, human rights respect and promotion, promotion of social justice and the general process of peacebuilding.

Today, the Government of national unity is struggling to reverse the aforementioned experiences by building sustainable peace and security, not only in Rwanda but even beyond. In this long and complicated journey, every Rwandan is a target, but the youth is the major focus since they are the future pillars of the nation. Therefore, the question is how do we engage the youth in an idealistic approach towards a sustainable future? This paper tries to answer this question by reviewing different literature and analyzing students’ energetic voices from the two institutions of higher learning in Rwanda: Umutara Polytechnic and Rukara College, all situated in Eastern Province.

Justification of the Applied Methodology
This section explains the methodology used. Two methods of data collection were applied: public engaged lectures and desk research. The research approach was analytical whereby different literature was analyzed to contextualize the study as well as analyzing the data from the public engaged lectures. Consequently, within the framework of celebrating “Peace Week” in Rwanda, which is connected to the “International Peace Day”, the Center for Conflict Management of the National University of Rwanda preferred to use Public Engaged Lectures as way of sharing ideas through public dialogue on how to build sustainable peace for a sustainable future in post-genocide Rwanda.

Desk research was applied to review different books and academic journals in order to contextualize Rwandan youths’ ideas and views in relation to what other scholars have written on in differing contextual backgrounds or realities in post-conflict societies.

The Public Engaged Lectures Concept
Public engaged lectures engage the audience in dialogues that provide shared views and ideals towards a common understanding in order to achieve sustainable peace and security. The method emphasizes people’s exchange of ideas and a somewhat collective understanding of their local and national problems. The method also employs small group discussions that aim at enriching views and ideas shared in a public engaged discussion.

Theorization of Building Ideals of Peace and Security
Knowledge in peace and conflict studies like other social sciences is built either on theorization or conceptualization. In this regard, building ideals for peace and security in any post conflict society can be based on some theories, best practices and imported approaches. In this paper, I chose four theories to explain what is going on in building a sustainable future in post-genocide Rwanda. These theories are applied concurrently depending on what kinds of conflicts are managed or solved in the overall transformational process. They include: conflict management theory, conflict resolution theory, conflict transformation theory and reconciliation theory. In order to put these theories into practice, it requires various actors to think systemically in a dynamic setting. In fact, the aforementioned theories reflect differing paradigms and different types of interveners.

Using the conflict management theory while enhancing youths’ participation and involvement in building sustainable peace and security, the focus is on setting up strong state institutions that respond to their needs and civil rights (Wallensteen, P., 2002). In addition, the theory emphasizes focusing on power and resources. Power sharing and resource distribution is instrumental in securing sustainable peace and security while envisioning a sustainable future (Stephan, 2002; Lederach, J. P., 1997). In Rwanda, this theory is combined with the basic needs theory since building sustainable peace cannot be easily achieved when people are living an absolute poverty. The ultimate approach is positive and constructive handling of peoples’ differences in social, economic and political divergences (Lederach, J. P., 1997; Wallensteen, P., 2002).

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2 Public engaged lecture, February 2013, at Umurara Polytechnic
3 Ibid
4 Public engaged lecture at Rukara College, February 2013
Conflict resolution theory is about transcending the root causes of conflicts. The government of national unity from 2000 when Vision 2020 was first implemented, to date, has been sensitizing the youths to think the unthinkable in analyzing and questioning why the 1994 genocide against Tutsi occurred. The emphasis is on reasoning beyond what people have lived since the post-independence regimes (MINALOC, 2011). This helps different stakeholders to work on the new relationships that promote social cohesion. This is only possible through a positive new critical thinking and reasoning, empowered by skilled but powerless third-parties (Fisher S., et al; Ho-Won, J., 2005).

Conflict transformation theorists argue that peace and security ideals should be embedded in a long process of engaging and transforming relationships, interests and discourses. It also becomes vibrant when a constitution in place that perpetuates violent conflict is changed (Wallensteen, P., 2002; Ho-Won, J., 2005). The goal is to achieve a win-win situation through constructive dialogues and debates as catalysts for change. Since conflict transformation is a gradual process, it requires a comprehensive approach where different actors play a variety of roles through a series of phases in any post conflict society. The Rwandan government in a transformational process is undertaking transformational changes in political, economic and social dimensions with reference to Rwanda’s Vision 2020 and Millennium Development Goals.

Lastly but not least, is the reconciliation theory. Is there anything called reconciliation theory? The answer might be “yes” or “no” depending on somebody’s field of discipline. Some scholars do assert that it is a concept not a theory (Goodhand, J., 1999) while others look at it a theory (Lederach, J. P., 1997). Reconciliation is increasingly becoming “a backbone for reconstruction policies” in every post conflict society (Molenaar, A., 2005: 28; Ho-Won, J., 2005). Applying this theory in the Rwandan context, it explains how whatever progress the country has undergone is based on reconciliatory measures that have been set up by the government of national unity, the youth and women being the prime movers of the process. Using Lederach’s diagram of reconciliation explains the nature of reconciliation in post genocide Rwanda:

![Figure 1: Lederach’s understanding of reconciliation](image-url)

**Source:** Lederach, J. P., (1997).

For example, Gacaca courts have contributed to the reconciliation process amongst Rwandans in varying perspectives, as shown in the above diagram. It has contributed to the truth about how genocide was carried in respective villages, it provided justice to the perpetrators, and peace and mercy to genocide survivors by knowing where perpetrators killed their beloved ones and the majority of perpetrators were forgiven.

**Energetic Voices from the Youth: Building ideals for sustainable Rwanda**

In any post-conflict society, peace building is a long process with ups and downs. It is a process that should be owned by all parties (victims and perpetrators) collectively and responsibly. Much as the external support may be of usefulness, internal solutions result from a holistic diagnosis relevant to citizens’ or communities’ problems. The tendencies that external solutions mainly from the North can help solve problems in the developing world have proved to suffer from dangerous use of double standards driven by long term selfish benefits – a reality that most people in the South have not yet realized. This is explained by an African economist at the World Bank called Dambisa Moyo in her book entitled “Dead Aid: Why Aid is Not Working and How there is a Better Way for Arica”, where she argues that in most cases the western world goes to the developing world with money to look for problems instead of looking for solutions (Moyo, D., 2010).

During the genocide, the United Nations and the international community did nothing to stop the genocide against the Tutsi. Instead countries like France, China, South Africa, former Zaire and Russia indirectly facilitated the genocide by arming and training the perpetrators (Dallaire, R., & Beardsley, B., 2003; Alusala, N., 2004). Even today, some of the aforementioned countries continue to fail Rwanda by harboring genocide criminals (Rutembesa, 2009). In the framework of fighting imperialism and neo-colonialism which use aid as a vehicle of these ideologies, the government of Rwanda has put in place Agaciro Development Fund (ADF). In
line with this government policy, the following are students’ ideals towards achieving sustainable peace and security for the sustainable future in the post genocide era:

- **National solutions to national problems**: Building sustainable peace and security requires intimate ownership of the problems as well as in-house solutions to such challenges. Solutions to Rwandan problems should largely come from the people themselves, rather than from outsiders that may use a top-down approach that may involve donor or top leaders’ influence. Even if external support may be needed, people must first scrutinize to what extent it may be useful in solving their local problems.

- **Legitimate Politics**: Legitimate politics is essential for promoting good governance and democracy which leads to peace and security. A legitimate state should have a political system that is accountable to the citizens, a relevant social and economic system that responds to the needed change for improved welfare. Within this framework, the youth at Umutara Polytechnic emphasized enhancing their participation and civic engagement in national political, economic and social affairs; putting in place stronger and responsive national institutions which can deliver quality public services to the citizens in general both at the national and local levels; integrating key democratic governance principles, for example, gender equality, human rights, and anti-corruption in national policy formulation and implementation, to mention but a few.

- **Understanding the global system**: This point may sound to some as irrelevant but it drives many national economies and security, especially in the South. The global system managed by the G-8 countries has continued to exploit developing countries, both politically and economically. In the political dimension, developing countries have been influenced by western democracy which in most cases cannot fit in the political realities of developing countries. This is largely reflected in the neo-colonization systems imposed by westerners. Economically, the power and influence of the global system is extended through aid strings and imbalances in the World Trade Organization (WTO).

My view towards building sustainable peace and security is that all human beings may belong to a certain group or groups; what matters is how those groups serve a purpose. The youths belong to groups of people or to generations in their communities. Yet not all youths make valuable their existence. Altering consciousness is what makes the group dynamic and thoughtful. Contextualizing these ideas, not all youths can think in the same manner but what is essential is having some who can be dynamic, creative and innovative to find solutions to their human existience. The same reasoning applies to what the youth should be doing in finding sustainable peace and security.

The youths should be resistant to unsuitable acts, ideologies and politics that divert them from the systems of ideas aiming at attaining sustainable peace, security and development. The government of national unity is working tirelessly to overcome the self-enclosed theories that had long divided the Rwandan society. The following figure illustrates the kind of synergy that should characterize the Rwandan youth towards a sustainable peace, security and development:

![Figure 1: Different Youths’ Synergies](image)

The following figure 2 shows different youths’ synergies that can energize the holistic approach to achieve a sustainable future. At least, every youth should be characterized by each of the above synergies if Rwandans are to find local solutions to their national problems in the post genocide era.

Education for peace is an essential and indispensable mechanism for a mindset towards a sustainable peace, security and development. Peace cannot be realized without a strong policy in educating for peace. Peace education is fundamental for teaching principles of non-violence, respect and promotion of human rights, justice and equality and promotion of dialogue amongst youths. It also includes gender equality, environmental sustainability, social responsibility and entrepreneurship and human security.

The youths are in need of skills for peaceful interaction and critical thinking if they are to realize a peaceful nation and globe. Such skills empower them while applying different approaches towards building a sustainable future. It also re-energizes community organization, reconciliation, social transformation and cooperation at the grassroots level. Creation of a peace culture requires participation and engagement of each through constructive reasoning and thinking. The government should promote creativity and idealism that enriches political processes by strengthening youth empowerment and participation in social, economic and political spheres.

**Youth and leadership: A catalyst for sustainable peace and security**

The youths being a dynamic part of a country’s population need a kind of leadership that really responds to their needs. Indeed, their involvement and engagement in addressing their needs and interests remains paramount. Leadership is about providing inspiration, focus and direction within a nation, community or a group of people.

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5 Public engaged lecture, Rukara College, February 2013
6 Public engaged lecture, Umutara Polytechnic, February 2013
8 Public engaged lecture, Rukara College, February 2013
9 Ibid
Leadership and good governance is what leads to peace, security and development. Without leadership and good governance the trio cannot be achieved\(^{10}\).

**Figure 2: Youths synergy towards peace, security and development**

- **Purpose**: The youths should have a clear purpose and commitment
- **Vision**: The youths should have a powerful vision as inspiration for a sustainable future
- **Clarity**: The youths should clarify roles and commitments
- **Projects**: The youths should invent projects to achieve their purpose with clear accountabilities and action plans
- **Identity**: The youths must develop a strong national identity
- **Communication**: The youths find agreed ways to work through conflict rather than avoiding it. Youths agree to communicate even when it’s hard
- **Learning**: Youths increase effectiveness by identifying what they have learned as they go along through youth process and project monitoring and evaluation


Rwanda needs the kind of leaders that would enable the youth to imagine and create a sustainable future through dialogues and ownership of their problems at different local administrative levels. Leadership should be understood as a natural function\(^{11}\) of people working together to achieve their desires and interests. It is a

\(^{10}\) Public engaged lecture, Rukara College, February 2013

\(^{11}\) See Thomas Aquinas writings 1267-1274
leadership promotes creativity, innovation, participation and ownership of the conflict. Social change remains on reflection, and finding solutions to national challenges. In ancient Rwanda, Ingandos were first developed by the government to promote sustainable development, etc. For a conflict to occur and reach its climax, there is always a concentration on the learning processes. The support for processes of a comprehensive social change remains paramount while building a sustainable future for the youths in general. Who should be the driving force? The youths are always part of leadership which also works for the youth. Youth leaders are required to actively engage the people or their communities in building a sustainable future. 

Indirect approaches of building ideals for peace and security for a sustainable future

In every country, whether a conflict free nation or a post-conflict nation – there should be both direct and indirect approaches to building ideals of peace and security among the citizens. These approaches may vary in accordance with what exists in a certain country. In the Rwandan context, the following were realized: (a) cooperation for mutual benefit and (b) getting to know each other by doing things together. Cooperation for mutual benefits includes facilitating business deals, water projects and environmental projects. The Rwandan government believes that peace and security (specifically human security) cannot be achieved without facilitating business deals both internally, regionally and beyond\(^{12}\). That is why the government constantly considers reforms in doing business in order to ease the business environment both Rwandans and foreigners. This is key to economic growth and economic development in general. Water and environment projects play a leading role in promoting human security. These are highly prioritized both in MDGs and in Rwanda’s Vision 2020.

Getting to know each other by doing things together involve the workplace, schools/universities, churches, cooperatives, etc. The youth are the majority that occupies the aforementioned places or institutions. Through these institutions, it becomes easier to educate the youth about the ideals of peace and security for a future sustainable Rwanda. For example, civic education mechanisms like Irorero\(^{13}\) and Ingando\(^{14}\) are provided to the youth in those institutions so that civic education can benefit more in a collective fashion.

II. Conclusion

Building ideals for peace and security amongst the youths for a sustainable future can be attainable once concentration is put on the learning processes. For a conflict to occur and reach its climax, there is always a system in which that conflict takes place. That is why it is imperative to have a constructive transformation process that changes that system. The support for processes of a comprehensive social change remains paramount while building a sustainable future for the youths in general. Who should be the driving force? The local actors must be the owners of the whole comprehensive process, with an inclusive and holistic approach where power asymmetries are considered and dealt with accordingly. Stakeholders should include the state institutions; development and humanitarian organizations; international NGOs that engage in peace, security and transformation of a conflict and all parties to the conflict.

III. References


\(^{12}\) MINECOFIN, Annual Report 2011

\(^{13}\) *Itorero* is a traditional school in which people discuss issues like good governance, national unity, reconciliation, improving social cohesion in the post-genocide era, justice, and economic development, as well as sustainable development, etc.

\(^{14}\) The word *Ingando* is taken from the Rwandese verb "’Kugandika’", which refers to halting normal activities to reflect on, and find solutions to national challenges. In ancient Rwanda, Ingados were first developed by the military.”


