

# Post Genocide Rwanda

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For post-genocide Rwanda, "when you talk about reconciliation you are talking about reconstruction," said Aloisea Inyumba, Executive Secretary of the National Commission for Unity and Reconciliation in Rwanda (NCUR).



Speaking Thursday morning (6 July) on "Memory and Reconciliation," she reviewed the grim statistics that only begin to tell the story of the 100 days in 1994 that left one million dead, more than three million forced into exile and Rwanda's social, political and economic life in ruins.

Some 69 percent of Rwandans live below the poverty line, she said, and 55 percent over age 15 can't read or write.

"It was not just Hutu killing Tutsi, but husbands killing their wives, mothers killing their children," Ms. Inyumba said. "Women weren't always the peacemakers. 600 women are in prison accused of being perpetrators."

"The management of the aftermath was not easy," she said. "Despite what we went through, a new spirit has emerged."

Ms. Inyumba described a series of challenges – burying the dead, collecting the more than 300,000 orphaned children into centers and finding them homes, repatriating refugees and resettling the internally displaced. 120,000 Rwandans are in prison, awaiting judgment in respect to their participation in the genocide.

Today, all but 15,000 of the orphans have been adopted. Refugees and the internally displaced have been reintegrated. Basic security has been assured, she said.

A new broad-based government brings all three ethnic groups – Hutu, Tutsi and Twa -- together in the Parliament. A new constitution is being written; a new education system and elimination of the ethnic identity card are helping promote equality, she said.

Rwanda's eight million people "are trying to see how we can build a new culture and values," she said.

NCUR was established in 1999 and given a broad mandate by Rwanda's Parliament to promote reconciliation. "To us, reconciliation is a journey, a personal journey everyone is going to make in our country," Ms. Inyumba said. "It's not easy, but we are going to have a new country."

While the NCUR is analyzing the historical roots of the genocide, she said, "our main focus is today, what we the leaders of Africa today are doing."

Ms. Inyumba, former Minister of Gender and Social Affairs, said the commission works closely with the Human Rights and Electoral commissions and consults regularly with the grassroots on how best to achieve justice and reconciliation.

The NCUR has launched programs of civic and peace education, practical reconciliation and monitoring, and each year ask citizens' comment on, "What are the positive indices that show reconciliation is progressing? What are the hindrances?" When she returns home, the NCUR will lead a three-day session on reconciliation for Rwanda's Parliament.

The church – shockingly complicit in the genocide – is an essential partner in the reconciliation process, Ms. Inyumba said.

"The genocide engaged all our society's institutions," she said, "even those that were supposed to protect people, including the church. The church failed its prophetic role in our country. Rwanda is 80 percent Christian – it's hard to understand how the genocide happened. People ran to the churches for safety and they became slaughterhouses. Most churches in our country are closed.

"Protestant churches were the first to acknowledge publicly in the stadium that they were wrong," Ms. Inyumba continued. "Now there's a review within the Catholic Church and growing acknowledgement of responsibility. Churches are visiting the prison and explaining the new genocide law."

People who plead guilty and testify have the possibility of reduced punishment. A community service option is being explored. "We want to avoid impunity and promote justice, and also enable the community to move forward together," she said. So far, 20,000 have confessed and testified.

WACC has supported the Rwandan Council of Churches for 15 years, including the council's radio programs on reconciliation – launched in 1995. In 1998, WACC sponsored a seminar in Rwanda on the search for common values post-genocide, and continues to support the performing arts group Isango, which seeks to contribute to peace and reconciliation through traditional means of communication.