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Strength in Numbers? Creating a Peacebuilding Network in Rwanda

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Abstract

In the 18 years since the genocide, Rwanda has transitioned into a prosperous and peaceful country. However, the need for peacebuilding actors is not removed. Currently, programs in peace, unity and reconciliation work independent from each other. The result is many programs are duplicated; some areas of the country have many programs while other areas are basically neglected. It would be beneficial if peacebuilding efforts were able to come together in a more collaborative fashion. One way to increase collaboration is through a network. In this study, 17 organizations and 4 focus group interviews were conducted to assess the need, desire and benefits of a network.

The benefits of NGO networks are further supported through a literature review. The benefits of a network include: information sharing, resource sharing, capacity building, exposure to best practices and increased professionalism. While the benefits of a network are largely dependent on the leadership and motivation of members involved, the disadvantages are relatively few. This information was reinforced through conducting a Strengths, Weaknesses Opportunities and Risks assessment which again showed that the potential benefits outweigh the negatives.

It was unanimous among study participants that a network is needed. With careful planning and support the network can start on solid ground. A more collaborative peacebuilding sector, where organizations come together on a regular basis to share information will assist the continued peace of Rwanda. Additionally, sustainable peace in Rwanda can act as a springboard for peace regionally.

Introduction and Statement of Research Questions

In 1994 Rwanda experienced one of the most devastating genocides of the 20th century when in just 100 days, nearly 800,000 Tutsis and moderate Hutus were slaughtered by Hutu extremists (USAID, 2002). In addition, the Rwandan genocide is particularly tragic because the events largely went ignored by the international community. For instance, the UN, which is supposed to stop such tragedies, did virtually nothing to end the slaughter. Instead the genocide ended when a militia comprised of Tutsi refugees, the Rwanda Patriotic Front (RPF), stormed the country from neighboring Uganda. In the aftermath of war, the country was reduced to rubble. The infrastructure was completely destroyed, the economy ruined, inter-ethnic trust in tatters, survivors traumatized, dead bodies littered the streets and the rule of law nearly non-existent. As the new leadership, the RPF party set its sights on rebuilding the country and bridging inner ethnic trust.

In the 18 years since the genocide, the RPF government has led Rwanda through a tremendous transition. Today, Rwanda is a country largely living in peace. Confessed perpetrators, families of victims, returned refugees, and former combatants live in mixed communities without violent confrontations. The government has shown strong commitment to reducing poverty and improving health and education. Also, foreign investment is gathering momentum with Rwanda becoming the 3rd easiest place to do business in Africa (http://web.worldbank.org/wbsite/external/countries/africaext/rwandaextn, (2012). The construction of new hotels, office buildings, shopping plazas and businesses is quickly transitioning the capital, Kigali, into a very modern city. With all these efforts, the factors that made Rwanda disposed to violent conflicts in the past are now removed.

A large contributing factor to Rwanda's progress has been the government leadership. The government has led the country to confront head-on the root causes of the genocide while initiating programs to reconcile the past. However, the government cannot take credit for the transition alone. The people of Rwanda have been willing to participate in programs meant to rebuild the country and foster reconciliation. Another contributing factor has been numerous Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO's), Civil Society Organizations (CSO's) and international government bodies with peace and reconciliation programs, which is the focus of this paper.

Rwanda's transition presents an interesting example of the successes and challenges of peacebuilding in a post genocide country. Although Rwanda has come a long way, there are still unresolved issues and continuing challenges. The major issues include lingering grievances from the genocide, land disputes, psychosocial trauma, high population density and limited natural resources. Additionally, some worry that the government's tight control which limits free speech combined with the other pressures will possibly be fodder for future conflicts. Furthermore, even if Rwanda is experiencing peace, there is typically instability in the region which overflows into the country. Therefore peacebuilding actors are still needed in Rwanda.

As a field, peacebuilding is multifaceted requiring efforts from a wide range of different organizations. Some distinct peacebuilding disciplines included human rights, humanitarian assistance, sustainable development, environmental protection, conflict resolution, and the rule of law. In Rwanda, there are actors working in each of these distinct disciplines. However, these actors largely work independently from one another. There is little coordination or information sharing between organizations. As a result, a lot of efforts are duplicated; many programs are concentrated in certain regions while other areas of the country are neglected. It is therefore

reasonable to assume that information sharing and coordination between peacebuilding organizations would be advantageous. In other sectors, such as Legal Aid and Health, there are formal networks which bring organizations together but not in peacebuilding. A network for organizations with peace programs can help to ensure lasting peace for Rwanda with the potential of influencing the East Africa region.

This study will explore the possibility for a peacebuilding network and what the conceivable benefits would be. The central question of this study is: considering the current context, how can a peacebuilding network contribute to sustainable peace in Rwanda?

Sub-questions:

- Sub-question 1: In what ways does current peace building programs come together to share information and collaborate on activities? How can current collaborative efforts or partnerships be strengthened through a formal network?

- Sub-question 2: What are the perceived strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and risks (SWOR) for a peacebuilding network?

- Sub-question 3: If a peace building network is desired by peacebuilding actors, how can it be established at a national level?

Literature Review/ Authority for Study

The intent of the literature review is to clarify what is a network, the potential benefits and how a network is established and sustained. Although research is lacking specifically around peacebuilding networks there is substantial literature related to NGO networks. The benefits that apply to NGO networks in general also apply to NGO networks for peace building.

While conducting my initial literature review, I have found the term "network" has a broad meaning. According to Crutchfield and Grant (2008) a network is "at its most basic, a network is a group of related things that work together to achieve a larger goal (p. 108)." Although the same basic goal to work together, there are many different terminologies used to describe a network. Commonly used terms include (Liebler & Ferri, 2004):

- Community of Practice are often loose structured self-organized networks that exist so organizations can share knowledge and exchange ideas.

- Knowledge Networks generally have a mandate to generate and share information for the betterment of the network members.

- Sectoral Networks are organized around a specific sector, such as health. They are often donor-initiated. Sectorial networks are often highly collaborative, and are involved in capacity building, research and advocacy.

- Social Change or Advocacy Networks also can be called alliances or coalitions, are created in order to advocate for a cause. These networks often engage in government activities directly for the purpose of achieving the desired change.

- Service Delivery Networks are organizations that come together to coordinate the delivery of services, generally in health and human services.

No matter the term used to describe a network, they all provide the same basic functions; to connect people with similar interests. Networks benefit three main areas, the individual organizations, the NGO field or sector, and their beneficiaries. The benefits to individual organizations largely are through program coordination and knowledge sharing. In program coordination, the network can assist by helping to prevent duplication of programs in the same regions. Some simple ways this is done is by compiling a database or directory of NGO's working on particular issues and sharing that database or directory with all members (Abelson, 2003). In addition, coordination can happen through sharing. As each organization gets to know each other better, communication increases which improves coordination. The network may devise a more systematic way to track and share what organizations are doing and where. For example, the NGO Network Alliance Project in Zimbabwe links NGO's through a central development and human rights portal (2003). With program coordination, organizations can work together better instead of competing for the same resources.

Knowledge sharing or intra-organizational learning, takes place as organizations share program information with one another. Some networks promote sharing through newsletters or resource libraries for members. In addition, members can be asked to share updates during each meeting. Also a network can host events such as symposiums or workshops to promote sharing. Through sharing best practices are learned. Overtime, organizations may adopted applicable best practices which in turn increases the capacity of individual organizations (Abelson, 2003). Being a part of a network helps encourages the individual organizations to become learning organizations. Typically the term learning organization is used to describe how relationships with in a single organization. For organizations, the exposure to intra organizational practices can advance learning with-in individual organizations. Therefore, a wise practice of learning

organizations would be a apart of networks to gain the increased exposure to ideas and new developments in the field.

The third main benefit of a network is the increased potential for advocacy. Advocacy is more possible because multiple organizations are joined together; they are able to create a united voice. Additionally, networks can play a crucial role in advocating on behalf of their members or for their field. Some networks lobby governments to allow their members to work more effectively. One example is the Black Sea NGO Network which lobbies six countries to improve environmental protection of the Black Sea (Abelson, 2003).

Although knowledge sharing, coordination and advocacy are the three main benefits of networks there are many others which include (Liebler & Ferri, 2004):

- Increased access to information, expertise and financial resources
- Increased efficiency by leveraging specialization, network members can reduce costs and prevent duplication of efforts. Also, by sharing lessons learned and best practices can help NGOs from starting over every time they undertake new activities.
- A multiplier happens as individual NGO members achieve further reach and greater impact in relation to their own organizational goals when they participate in a network.
- Increased visibility of issues, good work, best practices and contribution of underrepresented groups.

Although the potential benefits of networks are high, there are also many potential challenges. Some challenges include lack of trust, lack of joint planning and action, reluctance

to pool resources, and competition amongst NGO's which can be common hurdles for networks to overcome. Certainly these challenges are points to be aware of and to consciously make efforts to prevent. Organizations thinking of joining a network should conduct a cost benefit analysis before doing so (Liebler & Ferri, 2004). Being a member of a network takes the commitment of time and often money. A cost benefit analysis helps to ensure the network meets the expectations of the potential members.

An important part of the discussion on networks is how they emerge and are sustained. Networks are a very old practice. Midwives, craftsmen and other specialists have formed networks to share knowledge to support their professional trade (Taschereau & Bolger, 2006). For NGO organizations the reason for being in a network is basically the same as a craftsman, to learn, share ideas and increase professionalism. There are three reasons suggested in the literature as to why they immerge (Taschereau & Bolger, 2006).

1. Sense of urgency such as major social, economic or environmental problems.
2. Frustration by public and academic actors who marginalize efforts to impact research or policy.
3. High potential possibilities from sharing information.

Networks come into existence through a number of ways. Network can be initiated by external or internal forces, or for practical of value based reasons (Liebler & Ferri, 2004).Although there is not a formula for networks formations, networks generally develop from a top-down or a bottom-up process. Top down networks are usually initiated by government mandates or by donor organizations. Governments can initiate a network by creating a law or mandate that NGO's need to create a network. Also, donors often initiate a

network by holding a workshop were they lead NGO's to form a network. Both of these are top-down because the external entity manages and guides the formation of the network.

The bottom-up approach largely comes from the desire of the NGO's themselves to have a network. Often networks start when several organizations agree to come together to hold a meeting around a particular issue. Such a group may decide to take on various activities such as organizing a conference or outreach to other organizations.   If the activities and the members continue to grow, the working group may see the need for a more formal status as a network (Abelson, 2003). It is generally believed that a bottom-up formation of a network is more sustainable than the top-down. According to Liebler and Ferri (2004) "networks that form organically out of internal impetuses tend to be more sustainable in the long run (p. 22)." This is because these networks are formed around existing social capital that is based on standing relationships.

Network sustainability is an area worth exploring. While networks can function as a NGO on their own, their actually sustainability may not be everlasting.   There are two things to keep in mind, one is how to mobilize the forming of a network and advance it. The second is how to keep a network sustaining over a long period of time. To understand this better, it is important to understand some elements of strong networks. According to Dutting and Sogge (2010) there are four elements for advancing NGO networks which are:

- Trust is needed because without trust information will not be shared openly and strong links will not develop to make a network an effective collaborative effort.

- Specific socio-political settings and events. There needs to be an issue which NGO's are willing to work on together such as HIV prevention. In times of crisis or socio-political settings increases the willingness of NGO to work together as a network.

- Pragmatism, clear division of roles, tasks and acknowledgement

- Incentives to collaborate- NGOs will advance participation if they see that being a member of the network will advance their long term goals.

Additionally there are two other areas related to network sustainability which are adaptability and leadership (Liebler & Ferri, 2004). Adaptability is important because the network will have to adjust to changing circumstances and adjust over time to continuously provide for the members. Without good leadership the network will fail to function. Network leaders must have to have the skills and motivation to lead the network. As networks often function to serve NGO's, the network leaders will need to be able to work in non-hierarchical ways (2004). A network leader will need to foster trust, motivation and mobilize members.

For networks to establish and maintain there is an interplay between challenges, opportunities in the environment, and motivations which drive the network. In Taschereau & Bolger's (2006) study they graphically depict this interplay that make networks work. Not all networks require this capabilites all the time, never the less it is an interesting model. The three areas however external environment, network capabilities, and motivation together are present at all times.

External Environment
- Complex problems
- Opportunities, e.g opening up political space

- Possibilities afforded by information technology

- Funders/ Donors' interest and support

Network Capabilities

- Informal leadership

- Legitimacy & Collective Identity

- Technical Expertise & Resources

- Facilitating Participation

- Managing & Serving the Network

- Communications & Management Systems

- Adaptive Capacity

Motivation/ Needs

- Access information, expertise, resources

- Share/develop knowledge & practices – innovate

- Reduce isolation, increase visibility & legitimacy

As there are areas which help to foster the sustainability of a network, there are many ways to prevent collaboration. According to Dutting and Sogge (2010) some of the things that prevent cooperation include:

- Conflicting differences in the ideologies and objectives of the members

- Opposing differences in leadership style leading to transparency issues and lack of trust

- Competition for the same funding sources.

- NGO fears of being associated with others to much resulting in loss of their identity and accomplishments.

In the field of Organizational Development, networks stand out as a distinctive structure which has its own distinctive organizational form. Unlike organizations such as an NGO, networks are constituted through voluntary associations of individuals. Members join or leave a network largely based on their perception of the value added by being involved (Taschereau & Bolger, 2006). Organizations may have values and objectives similar to that of a network, but relationships with in organizations are not entirely voluntary. Many relationships in organizations are contractual based on legal and or financial. Additional, accountability with-in a network is different from that of an organization. A network tends to be non-hierarchical. Members are able to share ideas and set the direction of the network. Organizations on the other hand, have hierarchical relationships where decisions pass through executives, boards, stakeholders and others. Authority generally rests at the top of an organization while the authority in a network should rest at the bottom with the members. Because networks are unlike organizations, a different sort of logic needs to be applied when thinking about how networks are managed. Also, this lens helps members understand that there are not hierarchical lines. All members are equal therefore all voices should be respected and heard for the benefit of the collective. Additionally, networks should be seen as complex and adaptive system. The survival of a network depends on its ability to adapt to change continually evolve.

> Evidence suggests that effective and sustainable networks have the potential to self-organize and to create new structures and new ways of relating and mobilizing energy for action, and to combine formal and informal elements to achieve their purpose (Taschereau & Bolger, 2006, p. 6).

Through interaction and sharing networks can influence NGO growth and professionalism. Successful networks have shown the ability to add-value to participants

through more scalable results than individuals or organizations could do alone. There is not necessarily one right way to form a network. For instance, it can be small or large, informal or formal, initiated top-down or bottom-up. The important thing is that the organizations involved have a common understanding of the goals and objectives of the network. If the network starts on solid ground and the organizations involved are willing to contribute, the potential benefits are high. Through knowledge sharing, coordination and advocacy networks become a powerful body.

Research Methodology

The intent of this research is to give an accurate portrayal of how a peacebuilding network can help provide sustainable peace in Rwanda. The research was conducted using qualitative data collection tools with interviews as the primary research source. The interviews represent a diverse number of actors in the peacebuilding field or directly involved in NGO networks. Those represented include faith based organizations, local non-governmental organizations, international non-governmental organizations, government bodies, education institutions, and NGO networks. A total of 17 individual interviews and 4 focus groups were conducted. The research was conducted over the period of 1st July to 13th August. After data collection an initial review was conducted at World Vision with a review team. A second review was conducted at a workshop held by the NURC and in attendance were over 20 organizations in the peacebuilding field. The information in this report represents not only the data collected but also feedback by those who would potentially make up a network.

The following qualitative research methods were employed:

- Preliminary interviews: The preliminary interviews were a small sampling intended to gather ideas, bring focus and clarity around the intent of this study. The preliminary interviews included 1 donor organization (USAID), 1 international NGO (Search for Common Ground), 1 Local NGO (MEMOS).

- Interviews with key organizations. The interviews with key organizations represent a diverse sampling of peacebuilding actors in Rwanda. Those interviews include members of Faith Based Organizations, Local NGOs, Internationals NGOs, Government bodies, Education Institutions, and Networks/ Forums. A listing of organizations interviewed follows (see appendix I for a more detailed descriptions of organizations)

    o **Faith Based Organizations**: African Evangelistic Enterprise, African Leadership and Reconciliation Ministries, Catholic Relief Services

    o **Local NGOs**: Institute of Research and Dialogue for Peace, Never Again Rwanda, Rwanda Men's Resource Center, Safer Rwanda

    o **International NGOs**: Care International, International Alert, La Benevolencija, Search for Common Ground

    o **Learning Institutions**: Center for Conflict Management (National University of Rwanda)

    o **Government Bodies**: National Unity and Reconciliation Commission, Parliamentary committee of Unity Reconciliation, and the Fight Against Genocide

    o **Network/Forum**: Legal Aid Forum, NGO Forum on HIV/ Aids and Health Promotion

- o **Field Based Discussions**: 4 discussion groups were conducted in the regions of Kinihira, Rugarama, and Nyamagabe. The discussion groups were represented by diverse groups of peacebuilding actors representing faith based organizations, civil society organizations, school officials and government entities. Approximately 30 people in total were involved in the field based discussions groups.

- o **Presentation of findings:** As stated earlier the findings were presented first to a review team at World Vision and secondly at a work shop held by the NURC. This was a forum to present findings and for review by those who would potentially form a network. Question, concerns, comments and actions during this presentation have been included in this report.

After data collection, all interview transcripts were coded and compiled into an excel spreadsheet. Common words, phrases and themes were identified to make the basis of the findings. Also, quotes that most accurately portray opinions were found. A team at World Vision reviewed the initial report. A revised report was presented during a workshop held by NURC to representatives of peacebuilding NGO's. This final report reflects comments and additional revision after the NURC presentation.

Results and Findings

Current Effort for Peace Building Collaborations and Networks

At the on-set of this study, it was unclear to what extent networks, forums, platforms and partnerships already exist between peacebuilding actors in Rwanda. Therefore, my first research question is; in what ways does current peace building programs come together to share

information and collaborate on activities? How can current collaborative efforts or partnerships be strengthened through a formal network?

From conducting interviews, it was found that peacebuilding actors come together in limited ways. Currently, the only way they meet as a sector are through workshops or conferences held by the government body, National Unity and Reconciliation Commission (NURC). As the name suggests, the NURC is responsible for unity and reconciliation activities throughout the country. As part of their mandate they call all peacebuilding related NGO's together to meet two times per year. I was in attendance at the most recent meeting. Although these meetings bring together most peacebuilding programs they are lacking many of the benefits that a more formal network could provide. For instance, discussing best practices, resource sharing, program information are among the things not discussed. The organizations in attendance barely are not familiar with other organizations are doing or where their programs are located. However, there are some benefits. Bi-annual meetings do bring together all peacebuilding actors. Although limited due to time constraints, organizations do get to know each other better because they are in attendance together. Through these meetings, the biggest benefactor may be NURC and the government of Rwanda. The government bodies may use these meetings as a forum to gather and disseminate information. During these forums the government is able to tell all peacebuilding actors at once how they can help fulfill the government's objectives.

Besides the NURC, the government of Rwanda joins peacebuilding actors through the Joint Action Development Forums. Joint Action Development Forums (JADF) is a NGO oversight body active in each district. JADF helps local authorities know the projects of every NGO that works in each district. The intent of JADF is to make sure that NGO's are doing

following their mandate and that their actions are having a positive impact. In addition, JADF

tries to make sure no two NGO's are doing the same programs in the same district. As part of

JADF there are regular meetings which bring together all NGOs working in each district. During

these meetings NGO's in peacebuilding activities come together to meet with those in health,

sanitation, microcredit, legal aid, education and so forth.   Although this does bring peacebuilders

together, it does so with those working in other fields. As a sector, peacebuilding specific

programs still are not sharing information with one another directly. Furthermore, like the

NURC, JADF tends to be forum for the government to tell NGOs how to align themselves with

the government's own objectives rather than a forum for information sharing or partnerships.

NURC and JADF are two examples of how peacebuilding organizations come together through

government initiatives.

Outside of government mandated forums, some peacebuilding organizations meet

together on their own accord. Faith based organizations, particularly of Catholic faith, are the

organizations that meet together the most often. For instance, Catholic Relief Services, Caritas,

Trócaire regularly hold meetings with one another to share information and collaborate. The

Catholic organizations also tend to have a larger network following the church structure which in

Rwanda includes diocese, parishes and the congregation. Although these faith based networks

are limited, they do achieve the same basic benefits of other NGO networks such as sharing

information and resources. The down side is they are not inclusive of organizations that are of

different faiths or non-faith based.

Interestingly, some faith based organizations such as Christian NGO's do not meet with

organizations of the same faith often. World Vision and others do work with both local and

international Christian churches but are more likely to work independent from other Christian organizations.

While conducting research, one small informal network represented by a diverse group of organizations was found. This small network includes six peacebuilding related organizations who are Safer Rwanda, Prison Fellowship International, CPR, Mosaic, RWARRI and INACUSE. These organizations are members of a larger network called, Economic, Social, Culture, Rights Network but because they each have a peacebuilding focus they decided to meet monthly together outside of the network as a cluster. During the meetings they discuss peace programs and how they can work together better. Ideally, they seek to develop integrated projects such as solar or water sanitation that combines trainings around peace and reconciliation. One simple example is a water tank that is placed between neighbors so that they have to talk with one another when they both come to fetch water. Although informal, this network represents the only network for just peacebuilding. The network is also represented by a diverse grouping of faith based organizations, local and international. As many of the organizations involved are small, some advantages of them coming together may be significant. For instance, if these small organizations work together they can pool resources and talents for common projects. As a group their activities become more visible. Also, through the network they can coordinate programs so that they are not competing for the same founding.

Another way organizations come together is through consortiums. A consortium is like a partnership where two or more organizations work together for a common project. In the sector of peacebuilding there is only one consortium made up of five organizations. The organizations involved are International Alert, Pro-Femmes, International Rehabilitation Council for Torture Victims, Duterimbere and Umuseke. This consortium represents international and local NGO's.

They have met monthly for two years for a project on social, economic, reconciliation and reintegration issues. Although the consortium's functions to accomplish a project, there is a sharing exchange similar to what is found in a network. Another benefit of a consortium is organizations involved may increase their capacity as each is exposed to best practices and professionalism of the others.

The final way organizations in peacebuilding come together are through partnerships. Like consortiums, partnerships are organizations that meet together to jointly work on a project. All organizations in the peace building field form partnerships for some projects. Some organizations tend to do this more than others. Care International for instance, has the goal to implement 75% of their programs through partnerships with other organizations. Other organizations, such as World Vision, form partnerships for specific projects and do not have a definite number of partnerships they wish to form.

As already noted, a network among peacebuilding organizations does not officially exist at a national level. There are numerous networks for other NGO sectors such as legal aid, health care, and even a network for all international NGO's. But peace building programs, as a sector, rarely come together and when they do, information sharing is very limited. There is the government body which calls peace building actors to meet twice a year, the Joint Action Development Forum which coordinates all development activities, a small cluster network, a consortium and partnerships. Through conducting interviews and focus groups, the need and a desire for a peacebuilding network has shown to be high.

Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Risks Analysis (SWOR)

While conducting this study it is clear that there is a need and desire for a peacebuilding network. In fact, it was unanimous among interviewees that a network for peace building is needed and can provide a significant benefit. Considering the positive response the next question is what are the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Risks of forming a network?

Strengths. There are several strengths which would help to assist the forming of a peacebuilding network. Among the top strengths is the desire to form a network. It was unanimous among organizations interviewed that a network is needed. Of course starting a network is easier if the organizations involved desire to be involved. But need and desire are not enough to actually create a sustainable network. Organizations involved need to see that being a member of the network will be advantageous to their organization. During interviews many organizations spoke to just that. Some benefits commonly mentioned include: diversity, increased visibility, donor attraction, collaboration, capacity building, coordination, synergy, better distribution of programs, prevention of duplication, advocacy, leverage, collective voice, peer review, increased credibility. This shows that organizations see the potential benefits to their organizations and to peacebuilding sector as a whole.

During my interview with La Benevolencija they made an interesting comment:

> "A network can be a place to debate issues, through debate together they can design a solution. Also through a network a lot of people can be reached at the same time, there is a broad reach. This can be a good time saver, because if only a small group is working on something it will take a long time but a larger group can really easily get a message out. Larger team there is a larger reach. A good network is a good forum for advocacy, both for the NGO's and for the government and beneficiaries." (La Benevolencija)

Another strong point is the support for a network by the Government body NURC. As part of their mandate, the NURC is supposed to coordinate peace, unity and reconciliation projects. During interviews, the NURC directors recognized that a more formulized network would help them to accomplish their mandate better. The NURC already calls together

peacebuilding actors twice a year. Because they often bring together peacebuilding

organizations, they can easily facilitate forming of the network. In fact, while this study was

being conducted, the NURC did just that. At the last meeting, I was asked to give a presentation

about how a peacebuilding network can be formed and the potential benefits. After which a

steering committee was formed representing five organizations. This steering committee I will

talk more about in opportunities. Although the NURC interest can be a strength, it is worth

mentioning, if they try to completely try to control the network their involvement may turn into a

weakness. This topic I will also discuss further later on.

One more promising government body, which showed interest, is the Parliamentary

committee for Unity and Reconciliation. During data collection, I spoke with the chair of this

committee. His interest in seeing the network formed was high and asked that at a later date I

present my research findings to his parliamentary committee.

Another strength, is many peacebuilding programs already form partnerships with one-

another. This means that there are already is a history between some of the organizations. In

addition some of the organizations participate in other networks so there is familiarity with how

and why a network functions.

The following is a statement said during interviews about strengths:

> "The strengths are the ability to meet together, discuss what needs to be done and have
> one voice when speaking with the government. A network can easily work in conjunction
> with government initiatives, preventing duplication, help better spread programs
> throughout the country. Information sharing, come together to share best practices and go
> to the field to see some of the issues and best practices." (NGO Forum on Aids and
> Health Promotion)

Weaknesses. There were several weaknesses highlighted during interviews. Some of the weaknesses can be attributed to the nature of NGO work. For instance, the weakness highlighted the most during interviews was issues of trust. Mistrust may result because NGO's typically compete against one another for donor funds. With mistrust, participants might not be willing to fully participate, share information or collaborate in ways that are productive. Mistrust is not unique to peacebuilding; rather it is an issue all NGO networks face. It is an area to be aware of and steps should be taken to build a collegial environment.

Another weakness is the issue of leadership. Like NGO organizations themselves, the strengths of the organizations are largely dependent on having good leadership. Finding leadership which has the time, willingness and skills necessary to manage the network will be a challenging task. Typically, network leaders already have high levels of obligations because they typically are leaders within their own organizations. Network leaders will have to be able to balance the needs of the network with their other commitments. Another challenging factor is that leadership typically changes either through election or rotation. So even if there is good leadership, at some point they will be replaced. Hopefully a standard is set which can be followed.

Time is another issue as participation in the network is extracurricular. Sometimes members may find that they go straight from their desk at work to network meetings without giving any thought about the topic of the network meeting. The reality is that participation in the network will not be the priority of everyone involved. Of course, the benefits of a network will be greater if those involved are willing and able to contribute.

Another weakness is different levels of expertise, capacity and ability to contribute. In many ways these weaknesses are also opportunities. It is a weakness because the lower

functioning organizations are not able to contribute with the same level of expertise. It is an opportunity because the lower functioning organizations can learn a great deal.

Additional weaknesses highlighted during interviews were; changes in leadership, copying, poor understanding of a network, not inclusive, high-profile organizations and small local organizations may find it difficult to interact, funding, lack of common understanding, lack of time, complacency, unequal contributions, and differing levels of capacity.

The following quote which was shared during an interviews speaks to the potential weaknesses:

> "A network can be just high profile organizations and people from those organizations, such as directors with PHDs talking about peace, but they are missing the community grass roots perspective. Also people can be egocentric wanting to do things their own way, don't disturb us type attitude. These can be largely addressed by who is involved in the network. A good network will need good leadership with well-rounded experience. There needs to be some good people who want to participate." (African Leadership and Reconciliation Ministries)

Opportunities. The opportunities for forming a peacebuilding network are substantial. The largest opportunity is, there is not a network for peacebuilding programs yet there is the expressed desire. A need/desire presents an opportunity but that alone will not be enough to form a long lasting network. To actually begin the network a few strategic partners will be needed to do the initial planning process. To my amazement, while conducting this study, the process of bringing together a group of strategic partners to start the network actually happened. This occurred at the last NURC meeting immediately after a presentation I did on the benefits for forming a network. Organizations present elected five representatives to form the steering committee. The representatives are from World Vision, International Alert, IRDP, ALARM and Search for Common Ground. These organizations are all highly active and well respected, so there is a high possibility that these organizations can get something started

The most important opportunity to forming a network is the continued need for peace building in the country and in the region. Although in Rwanda there is no violent conflict, there are still many unresolved issues. Furthermore, there is conflict regionally which overflows into Rwanda. For example, right now there are militias fighting close to the Rwandan border in the Democratic Republic of Congo. The continued needs of both Rwanda and the region are reasons enough to call peacebuilding actors to come together in a more cohesive way.

A possible opportunity, which went unexplored, is donor involvement. In other networks, such as the Legal Aid Forum, they achieved donor funding early on which helped them to become established. Funding can certainly make it easier to start the network as some initial costs could be covered. Besides monetary funding, donors can provide expertise to help organize the network. For example USAID and UNDP have provided training workshops which have helped form other NGO networks. Additionally, donor involvement will draw increased attention and credibility which will help draw potential members. However, there are draw backs to donor involvement. Donors can easily distract the members from what they are there to achieve in the network. As the donors are the ones funding the organizations themselves, their involvement might bring a degree of competiveness which will trust more difficult. Also, donor organizations such as USAID often end up controlling processes. They may unintentionally, prevent the organizations working together to build the network themselves.

The following quote was said during interviews and speaks to the area of opportunities:

> "Building a PB network has been talked about for a long time; there is interest and a need which creates an opportunity. Also there are many organizations with programs in peace building, all these organizations are working independently, and many programs are duplicated. Also, many organizations are not functioning at a level where they want to be so they would benefit from the network; this also an opportunity. The platform is already there but it needs to be built on." (Never Again Rwanda)

Risks. Bringing together multiple peacebuilding actors in network was largely seen as advantageous. Most people interviewed, spoke about risks that might be better categorized as challenges such as funding or time. While few real risks were highlighted there is at least one. The largest risk is if the network somehow offends the government. There are still many issues that are very sensitive in Rwanda. For instance, issues around ethnic identity and the government's involvement in the Democratic Republic of Congo are two examples. In addition, the government leads Rwanda with very tight control. Even free speech and the right to hold public assemblies are very limited. If the network attempts to push some of the sensitive issues or is believed to be doing so, the government will likely find a way to disband the network. Furthermore, numerous international NGO's and expatriates have been asked to leave the country for working in themes that are controversial. If the network is to be sustainable it will have to find ways to work with-in the political boundaries. Finding ways to work with the government will be more productive than working against them.

The following quote said during interviews speaks to the risks:

> "The people handling the network should be aware of the current situations in Rwanda especially the sensitive political situations, if the government sees the network as a challenge to what they are doing they will shut it down. The network leaders need to be able to balance the desires of the network with the desires of the government."
> (International Alert)

Table 1		
SWOR Matrix		
	Favorable	**Unfavorable**
Internal	**Strengths** • Desire and perceived need to create a network • Common overarching goals of peace, unity, reconciliation among potential members • Many peacebuilding organizations/programs in Rwanda • Familiarity with or involvement in other networks • Government (NURC) interest and willingness to help • Already existing strong partnerships	**Weaknesses** • Funding • Limited understanding of a well-functioning network • Management/ leadership availability or capability to manage a network • Challenges of large international NGO's, local NGO's and government bodies working together • Competition for donor funds • Trust issues • Much depends on leadership
External	**Opportunities** • NURC/ Government interest • Parliamentary support • Already existing small network • Increased visibility • Strategic partnerships • Desire/need for peacebuilding network • Continued conflict in border region with DRC • Need for peacebuilding programs in Rwanda • Build awareness of the potential benefit of the network • Donor involvement	**Risks** • Fear of offending government bodies, politically sensitive issues • Not wanting to be associated/affiliated with all organizations especially those who hold controversial views • Changes of leadership • Time/money • Differing opinions of how the network should function • Poor functioning network

Some Ways to Establish a National Peacebuilding Network

After conducting a SWOR analysis it is clear that a peacebuilding network is desirable

and would be beneficial, the next question is how it can be established at a national level? Some

good suggestions came from interviewees. One interviewee said:

> "It can be started as a small informal network and grow, a good structure and
> planning will help to form the network. Consider who is a strategic partner, choose
> wisely those to involve in the beginning, the forum should do A,B,C,D but not
> implementing projects. Sub-granting is ok though. What needs to happen is to create the
> structure, organize members, than find funding."

Interestingly, while conducting this study, three steps to forming a national network

already occurred. First, I conducted an initial study around the potential for such a network.

Next this study was presented at a workshop held by the NURC which included most

organizations working in this sector. Thirdly, after the presentation, the members in attendance

decided to elect a steering committee to start the network. The steering committee is actually an

exciting achievement towards building a national network. All of the five members are highly

credible organizations with a substantial number of programs around Rwanda. The steering

committee also represents a diverse body of international NGOs and local NGOs. Furthermore,

all of the organizations have programs in peace building but they have different focuses. For

instance, World Vision is a faith based organizations that focuses on youth, while International

Alert focuses on women empowerment and IRDP conducts research which influences public

policy. Having most peacebuilding organizations aware of the need for a network and for a

steering committee to be formed are great accomplishments, yet there remains challenges. One

is an issue that came up in the literature review related to top-down versus bottom-up

approaches. The steering committee right now is being coordinated by the government body

NURC. As the NURC is the coordinator this is a top-down approach. According to the

literature a bottom up approach is more sustainable. However, this may shift. In a recent

conversation with a member on the steering committee they said that they are frustrated by how

slow NURC is to call meetings. Because of their frustration, the organizations plan to call

meetings themselves and invite NURC to join, which may shift this to a bottom-up approach.

The largest challenge is time and motivation. As each of the steering committee members are

directors of sizable well-functioning organizations, their time to work on a network is extremely

limited.

Another consideration is what is meant by a network at the national level. Right now, the

way the network is beginning it will be based in the capital city, Kigali. This is logical because

each organization has a national head office here. However, this network will be only inclusive

of NGO directors, who generally spend most of their time in conferences or meetings and little

time at the committee level. If the network were to be truly national there would be network

meetings in each of the five provinces and possibly in each of the districts. This larger network

would bring together field managers directors and those who work more directly with the

population. In many respects, bringing together the more grass roots level actors may achieve

results faster. Information can be more easily relayed and received from the network in Kigali to

the province and district networks. Also, as the field offices work more closely with the

population, the sharing of best practices may achieve quicker results than when the directors in

Kigali share best practices. Interesting during my four focus group interviews, which were done

outside of Kigali, one of the major concerns was how to involve the grass roots level. The focus

groups showed interest in a network but felt that their local level perspective would be left out.

An interesting statement made was, "A network can be just high profile organizations and people

from those organizations missing the community grass roots perspective. It might turn out to be

directors with PHDs talking about peace." As the network is forming, they local level is something that is lacking. However, such a large network will take more time, planning and funding to start and maintain.

It is exciting to see some progress to forming a network being made while conducting this report. A national network seems to be underway, although at this point it will be represented by NGO head offices in Kigali. Some considerations should be made to include more of the local level offices. However, at this point, the most important thing is the steering committee continues to meet and they call together all organizations working in this field for network meetings.

Analysis

It is interesting that NGO's with programs in the field of peacebuilding do come together in various ways such as partnerships, NURC meetings, JADF meetings and through smaller consortiums, but there is not yet an established network. Through these different meeting points the organizations that would make up the network already have a familiarity with one another. Considering there are already connections, bringing together some of the organizations to form a network should be relatively easy. This is further supported in the SWOR analysis during which all organizations agreed that there is a need and a desire to establish a network. The shared history of interactions and the strengths are perhaps some good starting points. In addition, there is a strong link between the organizations because they are all working in areas of peacebuilding. As the literature review suggests, having a specific socio-political event helps to bring organizations together. In Rwanda, the event was the genocide, which residual effects still

present. An additional rallying issue is the continued conflicts regionally which cross over into Rwanda. These issues are more reasons for organizations to join in a network.

Another interesting finding is that organizations interviewed highlighted many of the advantages of networks but few mentioned disadvantages. This is interesting because many of the organizations have a positive view of networks. Although networks are seen as advantageous few interviewed mentioned concrete ways to make sure that the advantages actually happen. It seemed assumed that by forming a network the benefits will take place automatically. A well-functioning organization, including a network, does not just happen. As highlighted in the literature review there are several factors of successful networks. These include trust, specific settings/ events, pragmatism and incentives to collaborate (Dutting & Sogge, 2010). Additionally a network needs good leadership and motivated members. Without the success factors will not be realized, which makes the sustainability questionable.

On a positive note the organizations involved currently are motivated and really want a network. The steering committee is already formed; they have scheduled meetings and set objectives. This motivation also show that forming the network meets the organizations own goals. According to the literature review NGOs will advance participation if they see that being a member of the network will advance their long term goals. As there is the seed in place, there is certainly the chance that this network will be formed.

Recommendations and Conclusion

Recomendations

Through conducting this research, it is clear that a peacebuilding network can contribute to sustainable peace in Rwanda. Right now, there are two main issues that a network would

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solve; the sharing of information between organizations and the coordination of programs around Rwanda. A network would promote inner organization learning while preventing duplication of projects which in turn would benefit peace in Rwanda. Furthermore, as organizations learn and adopt best practices, the impact they have will be greater.

 To make sure the network starts on solid ground the following six recommendations should be considered.

Recommendation one. Consider the desirable size and structure of the network. As discussed in the literature review, a network can certainly be a small informal gathering of NGOs who come together to share information, such as a community of practice. A network can also be more formal with a secretariat, board of directors, membership fees and regular meetings. Either type of network has pros and cons, so early on it should be decided what the initial size and scope is necessary to achieve the desired goal. The larger, more inclusive and more formal the network is, the more planning will be needed. Either way, starting with a small group of motived members will certainly help.

Recommendation two. This recommendation is specific to Rwanda. Find ways to be inclusive of the government without having them completely run the network. This recommendation is also supported in literature reviewed that suggests that NGO's find creative ways to engage with government instead of being antagonistic. In is important to build a relationship with government entities because in the end they determine economic and political frameworks which development depends (Edwards & Hulme, 2004). As the NURC is already involved, including them as a member is a good idea. Such a relationship can be mutually beneficial. The government can easily reach all peacebuilding NGO's and the NGO's can form a direct line of communication to government representatives. This connection will assist with

advocacy efforts. However, if the network wants to be completely separate from the NURC it may cause suspicion and find continuing very challenging. As many issues in Rwanda are still very sensitive so discretion is needed. At this point, it would be better to be inclusive and transparent with government actors while the organizations themselves maintain ownership of the network. Again, this was supported in the literature which suggests that a network created and controlled by the organizations is more sustainable than one that is controlled by an outside force such as a government body or a donor.

Recommendation three. The network should be seen as a joint effort of multiple partners. If the network were directed by just one organization it is unlikely to draw members or have full participation. If for instance, NURC completely manages the network, there will be suspicion that the network is a medium for the government to impose its will on NGOs. Likewise, if World Vision manages the network other organizations will be suspicious that it is only to the benefit of World Vision. Through a joint effort, members will feel ownership over the network which will help to build bonds and keep motivation.

Recommendation four. Have a dedicated coordinator. This person can possibly be hired, a volunteer, a graduate intern or even elected from the membership. The main thing is they have the time and ability to assist forming the network. Many of the initial tasks will be administrative such as creating a directory of all members, drafting documents, organizing meetings, emails, and phone calls. Having a single point of contact will help to keep things moving and reduce confusion as roles and procedures develop.

Recommendation five. Consider involving a donor. A donor can cover the initial costs before membership fees are collected. Also, some donor organizations have expertise in forming

NGO networks. In some cases donors even insist that organization they fund are part of a larger network. Their expertise can help to provide advice, training, tool kits and more, which can help give the network a solid foundation. Also, donor funding can be used to hire a consultant who has expertise in NGO networks to help guide the initial process. Some donor organizations which have helped other networks are USAID, UNPD and the Belgium Embassy. However, involving a donor should be done with some caution. A donor organization's involvement may distract members from the real objectives of the network. Some separation between the intent of the network and donor involvement would be needed.

Recommendation six. Establish early the criteria for membership. The network should decide if it is going to be inclusive of all organizations. Involving all organizations may be done at the risk of the network itself because some organizations have controversial views or programs. The network and the organizations involved run the risk of association. As the network starts it should choose members wisely. The literature suggests that organizations that already have a history of working together will have the easiest time forming a network. At the same time the network should be as inclusive as possible if it wishes to act at the national level. Following these recommendations will help the network to begin and to remain sustainable.

Conclusion

As Rwanda recently commemorated its 18th year since the genocide, the Rwandese people, the government and the organizations involved in peace building should feel proud. The transition of Rwanda is extremely impressive. However, there are still lingering grievances and continued challenges the country faces. In addition, the pressures both internal and external will require continued peace programs.

Considering the large number of peacebuilding programs, the potential benefits and the expressed desire, a peacebuilding network should be formed. In theory, a network can have a multiplier effect. This happens because organizations in different areas of peace building, such as justice, economic development, reconciliation, and education all come together. While together they learn from one another, adopt best practices, coordinate efforts and over time are able to provide better services. Of course, the potential benefits depend on the strengths of the organizations involved and their willingness to work together. Even in a poor functioning network, some of the benefits will be gained. However, if the network is not formed then the advantages will not happen at all.

While conducting this study it has been exciting to see the high interest in forming such a network. Particularly remarkable, is seeing a network steering committee formed among five influential organizations. In a small way, I feel, conducting this study has made a contribution. Hopefully, progress will continue to be made in creating a network for peacebuilding programs. A cooperative environment among peacebuilding programs will certainly help ensure continued peace. Additionally, a more secure Rwanda can act as a springboard for peace in the region.

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Appendix I Organizations Interviewed

Government Body

Name of Organization
National Unity and Reconciliation Commission (NURC)

Peacebuilding Focus
An initiative of the government of Rwanda with programs on Peace Building and Conflict Management (PBCM) and Civic Education. The NURC uses "tools" of *ingando* a traditional process for community reflection and solution-finding used by the NURC to build coexistence within communities as well as the development of community based associations and reconciliation clubs. It also holds an annual national summit chaired by the President and attended by local and international dignitaries.

website: www.nurc.gov.rw

Name of Organization
Committee Unity, Reconciliation and the Fight Against Genocide

Peacebuilding Focus
The Committee on Unity, Human Rights and Fight against Genocide is responsible for issues relating to:
a) Unity and reconciliation of Rwandans and human rights;
b) prevention and fight against the ideology of genocide, minimization and denial of genocide and all its manifestations;
c) follow up and search for solution of effects of the genocide against the Tutsi;
d) fight against discrimination in speeches, writings, in actions and in any other forms;
e) all issues relating to harmonization of Rwandan laws and international conventions on human rights ratified by Rwanda, except for those that fall under the responsibilities of other Committees;
f) human rights organizations;
g) functioning of the structures of administration that have relationship with respect of human rights
h) consideration of the report of the National Commission for the Fight against Genocide and that of the National Commission for Human Rights and preparation of draft recommendations within six (6) months of the date of submission of such reports to the Plenary Assembly

Website:http://www.rwandaparliament.gov.rw/parliament/Unity_and_Human_Rights.aspx

Local NGO

Name of Organization
Institute of Research and Dialogue for Peace

Peacebuilding Focus
The Institute of Research and Dialogue for Peace addresses peacebuilding in Rwanda engaging Rwandans in the process of: research, workshops, and consultation with the Diaspora. In addition IRDP uses publications, debate and dialogue clubs, as well as radio and television programs.

Website: http://www.irdp.rw/

Name of Organization
Rwanda Men's Resource Centre (RWAMREC)

Peacebuilding Focus
RWAMREC's distinctive and innovative mission focuses on mobilizing Rwandan men to support women's leadership; to contribute to the eradication of men's violence against women; and to serve as role models for the promotion of positive masculine behaviors. Building alliances and partnership with women organizations to promote women's rights and interests is central.

Website: www.rwamrec.org

Name of Organization
Never Again Rwanda

Peacebuilding Focus
Never Again Rwanda is a human rights, peace-building organization that was founded in 2002 and is registered as a Rwandan non-governmental organization. The founding members recognized that the minds of young people were used to destroy Rwanda leading up to and during the 1994 Tutsi genocide. Even as a post-genocide society, they observed that divisions continued to exist between young Rwandans. Guided by a vision of a nation where young people are agents of positive change and work together towards sustainable peace and development, the founding members established Never Again Rwanda (NAR) to empower youth with opportunities to become active citizens.

Website: www.neveragainrwanda.org

Name of Organization
Safer Rwanda

Peacebuilding Focus
Combat illicit small arms and light weapons proliferation. Prevent and manage conflicts. Promote gender equality and empowerment by fighting gender based violence and promoting income generation among women. Participate effectively in policy dialogue, formulation, implementation and monitoring. Protect the environment through providing alternative energy source and a forestation.

Website: http://www.saferrwanda.org/

International NGO

Name of Organization
La Benevolencija

Peacebuilding Focus
Radio La Benevolencija Humanitarian Tools Foundation (La Benevolencija) is a Dutch NGO that empowers groups and individuals forming the target of hate speech and ensuing acts. It broadcasts radio soaps, discussions and educational programs, in combination with grass roots activities that provide citizens in vulnerable societies with knowledge on how to resist manipulation to violence.

Website: http://www.labenevolencija.org/

Name of Organization
International Alert

Peacebuilding Focus
International Alert's Rwanda program provides space for interaction for groups most affected by the genocide and its consequences: survivors, ex-prisoners, ex-combatants and young people, thus building up trust and confidence between them. The program enables them to identify common ground for cooperation and co-existence through dialogue and microfinance. In this way, these often conflicting groups can better understand and appreciate one another and how to resolve conflicts peacefully.

Website: www.international–alert.org

Name of Organization
Search for Common Ground

Peacebuilding Focus
Their mission is to "transform the way the world deals with conflict: away from adversarial approaches, toward cooperative solutions.
Our ability to deal with conflict affects how we handle every issue that faces humanity. Whether global in nature, such as poverty, hunger or the environment, or closer to home, such as family or community relations, we face daily challenges to our abilities to deal with conflict constructively. We remain essentially optimistic that, on the whole, history is moving in positive directions."

Website: nkalisa@sfcg.org

Faith Based Organizations

Name of Organization
African Evangelistic Enterprise (AEE)

Peacebuilding Focus
We operate a range of community transformation and socio-economic development initiatives to reach the corners of the country. These include gender and child rights promotion, formal and in-formal education, health, nutrition, clean water and HIV/AIDS instruction. AEE Rwanda works in partnership with the community to develop community institutions and build governance capacity to address the poverty in our country.

Website: www.aeerwanda.org

Name of Organization
Africa Leadership And Reconciliation Ministries (ALARM)

Peacebuilding Focus
Its mission is "to empower the African church to impact the African continent by developing and equipping leaders with skills and tools to nurture and deepen the Christian faith for the transformation and reconciliation of the African communities, Rwanda and other countries in Africa."

Website: www.alarm-rwanda.org

Name of Organization
Prison Fellowship International

Peacebuilding Focus
Works with prisoners who wish to confess, facilitates dialogue between ex-prisoners and genocide survivors

Website: http://www.saferrwanda.org/

Name of Organization
Catholic Relief Services (CRS)

Peacebuilding Focus
As Rwanda works towards reducing poverty, strengthening civil society and reconciling its past, CRS engages in development activities in Agriculture, Microfinance and Peacebuilding. CRS also provides food assistance to the most vulnerable such as orphans, the disabled, elderly in institutions, and to partner organizations working with children and families affected by HIV and AIDS. Local Initiatives for Peace This project supports income-generating projects initiated by associations and communities working towards a peaceful future

Website: http://crs.org/countries/rwanda

Learning Institution

Name of Organization
National University of Rwanda – Center for Conflict Management [NUR – CCM]

Peacebuilding Focus
CMM's mission is to "address the knowledge gap in the field of genocide, peace, and conflict studies, and post—conflict reconstruction and reconciliation through conducting research, teaching as well as community services in the form of policy research."

Website : www.ccm.nur.ac.rw

Networks

Name of Organization
Legal Aid Forum

Peacebuilding Focus
A Rwanda where the indigent and vulnerable groups have equitable access to justice. To ensure the Legal Aid Forum is an effective and sustainable membership-based network of legal aid providers committed to advancing access to justice.

Website: http://www.legalaidrwanda.org

Name of Organization
Rwanda NGO Forum on AIDS and Health Promotion

Peacebuilding Focus
It is a network of NGO (Local, National and International NGOs) decentralized up to district level. This Forum gathers 160 NGO members (international and National). It is also member of Rwanda Civil Society Plate form at National level, Eastern Africa National Network on AIDS Service Organization (EANNASO), African Council on AIDS Service organization (AFRICASO) and International Council on AIDS Service Organization (ICASO) at international level.

Website: http://www.rwandangoforum.org

Appendix II Historical Back Ground

Human occupation of Rwanda is thought to have begun shortly after the last ice age. The first inhabitants are believed to be the Twa Pygmies who were later displaced by Hutu tribe's people. Later the third main ethnic group, the Tutsi's arrived from the north from 16th century onward. The area that these tribes occupied became more formally known as Rwanda in the 19th century when Mwami Rwabugiri consolidated the region into his kingdom (State, 2012).

The colonial powers were first Germany and after WWI, Belgium. Under Belgium imperialism, the practice of divide and conquer was used and placed the Tutsi in positions of power and privilege. The Tutsi's superiority was supported by popular eugenics movements in Europe and the United states. Belgium scientists categorized Tutsi as taller, lighter skin and larger skull size which indicated larger brain capacity (Loney Planet, 2010). Through eugenics, the Europeans believed that the Tutsi had Caucasian ancestry and were therefore superior. The ethnic divisions were made official when Belgium's conducted a large campaign to identify and issue identity cards according to certain measurements. Previously, ones tribe could change through marriage or ownership of cattle and had nothing to do with physical features. Once identity cards were issues the Belgium's placed the Tutsi's into political control. From 1935 until 1994 Tutsi, Hutu, Twa were indicated on identity cards.

Following WWII, Rwanda became a UN trust territory with Belgium as the administrative authority. In the 1950's Belgium began to encourage democratic reforms which the Tutsi elite were resistant to. In 1956, the Tutsi began to call for independence from Belgium which consequently Belgium switch alliances to now support the Hutu's (Loney Planet, 2010). During this same period ethnic clashes began to happen frequently. In 1962, Rwanda gain independence and in the first election a Hutu was named president. Ethnic conflicts continued to

escalate during which Tutsi's began to seek refuge in neighboring countries. From the refugee

communities, the Rwanda Patriotic Front (RPF) militia was formed which sought to regain

control in Rwanda.

In 1973, a period of military rule began when Defense Minister Maj. Gen Juvenal

Habyarimana overthrew the president. After which the constitution and suspended, the national

assembly dissolved and a ban on political activity was imposed. Also, during this time Tutsi's in

professional fields had to resign which prompted more to flee into exile.

In 1990, the RPF invaded Rwanda from their base in Uganda. This opened tribal hatreds

more fully. The RPF did a series of invasions again in 1991 and in 1993. After the 1993

invasion a cease-fire was called and the warring parties sign a peace accord.   Relative, peace

was maintained until the airplane carrying Juvenal Hyarimana, the President, was shot down as it

prepared to land in Kigali (State, 2012). The blame was placed on the Tutsis. Road blocks were

quickly set-up and the killing of Tutsis and moderate Hutu's swept the country rapidly.

Extremist Hutu's used the radio and television to support the killing and elimination of Tutsis.

In the next 100 days nearly 800,000 people were killed (CIA, 2012).

The RPF renewed its civil war when it got word of the mass killings. The RPF leader,

Paul Kigame, directed forces to invade from neighboring countries of Uganda and Tanzania. In

nearly three months, the RPF was able to gain control of the country. The Tutsi rebels defeated

the Hutu rule and ended the genocide. After the Tutsi RPF took control they reestablished the

government and set their sights on rebuilding the country. The RPF leader, Paul Kigami became

the president of Rwanda and has been instrumental in the transition of the country. Today,

Rwanda stands out as a country that has reconciled a difficult past while making significant steps to ensure a productive future.