

# PeaceInsight



## *Peace and Justice*



- Rwanda -

### **About Never Again Rwanda**

A peace building and social justice organization that arose in response to the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi. Guided by a vision of a society that enjoys sustainable peace, development and social justice."

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## SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY BEGINS WITH YOU

*“We all have a social responsibility and have to be mindful of what we do and say”*  
- **Aja Brown**

Aristotle, the legendary Greek philosopher said that humans are social beings whose every decision affects other people. Although the 21<sup>st</sup> century has been characterized by an individualistic culture, the global COVID-19 pandemic has awakened a moral responsibility to collective safety. As the pandemic raged on, the “me-first” mentality was overtaken by campaigns like ‘#WearItForMe’ and ‘#WeAreAllInThisTogether’ among others, with the aim to stir joint efforts towards keeping deaths and infections from COVID-19 at bay. The rugged, go-it-alone attitude has continued to be challenged by socially responsible actions towards the community and the planet.

Social responsibility is a complex idea that can be described by only two words: social, meaning public, and responsibility, the word that instantly adds weight to any adult's shoulders. But what does it really mean to be “socially responsible”? Is it giving to charities, donating blood, consuming green products, visiting the sick, giving to vulnerable households, volunteering in the community, sacrificing your life for others, or just giving up your life towards good causes? Well, no matter how you look at it or what you label it, it is simply the act of prioritizing the benefits of society over personal gains in every activity. Social responsibility can be a very heavy load to bear for anyone, but there is a possible intrinsic altruism that can drive us to do good.

We all can be socially responsible, by nurturing an awareness of how our decisions affect others. This can be through signing a “commitment of solidarity” in tackling social issues like poverty, discrimination, pollution, injustices, inequalities, genocides, conflicts etc, or playing a role in mitigating the effects of the current pandemic. Some of these choices require us to change the way we live; and this can only be achieved if individual choices are made in the collective interest because of internalized values.

Social responsibility begins with each one of us. Do you scorn someone struggling with mental distress? Do you spread hate and prejudice just to advance your agenda? Do you stay silent when you witness an injustice just because you want to protect your privilege? Every action you take in each of the scenarios will have an impact on people in the present and future.

As I welcome you to our last edition of the Peace Insight journal this year, I urge each one of us to ask ourselves if we are being responsible or irresponsible to our society. I wish you a happy festive season and a blissful New Year 2021.



**Dr. Nkurunziza Joseph Ryarasa**  
*Executive Director - Never Again Rwanda*

# WOMEN'S ROLE IN TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE IN RWANDA:

## THE CASE OF GACACA COURTS

### Background

Over the past two decades, the nexus between gender and transitional justice has increasingly gained the attention of peacebuilding scholars and practitioners. Although men are more actively involved in violent conflicts and human rights violations, the extant literature shows that women and girls are more affected than men and boys. Despite this situation, women and their specific gender needs have been overlooked in many transitional justice processes.

In Rwanda, the history of cyclical violence that culminated into the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi deeply affected women and girls. Besides the vile genocidal rape and related sexual violence against Tutsi women and girls, other women were widowed while still others - mainly Hutu saw their husbands detained or imprisoned over actual or alleged crimes of genocide and crimes against humanity. Paradoxically, some women also joined some of their husbands, brothers, or neighbors to exterminate Tutsi and instigate rape of Tutsi women.<sup>1</sup>

Considering women's plight in this context, one would expect women to play an active role in post-genocide reconstruction and in the transitional justice process. To date there is plenty of academic literature about women in post-genocide Rwanda. Most of it focuses on women mainly as victims, but also as perpetrators. However, there is not much work that documented women's role in transitional justice. This article seeks to briefly review the little extant literature to discuss the women's role in Gacaca jurisdictions in post-genocide Rwanda.



<sup>1</sup> African Rights. (1995). *Rwanda—Not So Innocent: When Women Become Killers*, London: African Rights.

Gacaca tribunals are a revived traditional justice system, which served as a homegrown solution to tackle the very challenging bone of contention resulting from the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi. Rwandans eventually chose this traditional system after noticing that the then classic judicial system had fallen apart, and was therefore unable to try over 120,000 detained suspects. It was established that such a high toll of suspects would have taken ordinary courts over a hundred years to try. Similarly, between 250,000 and 350,000 girls and women mostly Tutsi – were raped. Officially, Gacaca kicked off in 2001 and closed on 18 June 2012 after judging over a million suspects.<sup>2</sup>

Unlike in many countries such as South Africa<sup>2</sup> and Uganda<sup>3</sup> whereby women's role was not considered

across transitional justice processes, Rwanda made a significant difference in this regard. Women's role is explored at two levels: women as individuals and women's organizations.

## Women as voters, judges, and witnesses

Individual women played a vital role in the Gacaca process as voters, as *inyangamugayo* (judges) and as witnesses. In the first capacity, women participated massively in the elections of *Inyangamugayo* that took place from 4th to 7th October 2001.<sup>4</sup>

In the second category, women contested those elections and won an important proportion of positions (of judges). As of 2005, 34% of Gacaca judges were women<sup>5</sup> As time went by, the proportion of women judges in Gacaca courts turned up to 37% by their closure in 2013.

<sup>2</sup> Kusafuka, A. (2009). *Truth commissions and gender: A South African case study*. *African Journal on Conflict Resolution* 9(2). DOI: 10.4314/ajcr.v9i2.52172

<sup>3</sup> Nabukeera, H. M. (2010). *Transitional justice and gender in Uganda: Making peace, failing women during the peace negotiation process*. *African Journal on Conflict Resolution* 9(2). DOI: 10.4314/ajcr.v9i2.52176

<sup>4</sup> National Service of Gacaca Courts (Rwanda). (2012). *Gacaca Courts in Rwanda*. Kigali

It is also worth highlighting that female judges took this opportunity to “encourage women to report GBV, which is frequently not reported because of the stigma associated with being a victim.”<sup>5</sup>

As witnesses, female survivors of the Genocide Against the Tutsi were at the forefront of Gacaca court trials. Some had been victims of genocidal rape and others sexual torture. They testified against the genocide suspects, both “big” and “small fish”. In a similar vein, in certain cases, some women survivors, like their male counterparts, testified for suspects who were unfairly charged. Interestingly, in some cases, the wives of perpetrators also testified before Gacaca courts, either in favor or against their husbands who were then genocide suspects.<sup>6</sup>

## Women's organizations: Awareness raising, women's mobilization and advocacy

Since the inception of the Gacaca process, women's organizations have played an instrumental role in ensuring that women's participation is not only real and active, but also that gender issues are considered in the court's agenda. In this regard, these organizations conducted substantive work in raising women's awareness and mobilizing them to participate in Gacaca processes. These are organizations mainly grouped in Profemmes Twese Hamwe, an umbrella of Rwandan women's organizations.

Women (ordinary women, women's organizations and women leaders including women parliamentarians) were involved in the

<sup>5</sup> Gordon, E. (2019). *Justice and Gender. Gender and Security Toolkit, DCAF, OSCE/ODIHR, UN Women, Switzerland*

<sup>6</sup> African Rights and REDRESS. (2008). *Survivors and Post-Genocide Justice in Rwanda: Their Experiences, Perspectives and Hopes*. Retrieved on 24 August 2020, from <https://redress.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/Nov-08-Survivors-and-Post-Genocide-Justice-in-Rwanda.pdf>

making of the law governing Gacaca courts. In a similar vein, they actively participated in mobilizing other women to not only support these courts, but also to play the role of either judges or witnesses.<sup>7</sup>

About the gender justice, women's organizations in collaboration with genocide survivors' organizations successfully advocated for the consideration of rape as a genocidal crime. "In the beginning of the Gacaca trials, rape was placed as the fourth least serious [offense]. Pro-femmes/Twese Hamwe, in collaboration with other women's organizations and genocide survivors' organizations, advocated successfully for this crime to be considered as a crime of genocide and crime against humanity, resulting in it being placed in category 1."<sup>8</sup>

Therefore, women have not merely been victims and perpetrators of violence and the genocide in Rwanda. They also played a vital role in the transitional justice process after the genocide. Women took advantage of an already conducive political environment to advocate for and materialize their participation in that process. This is strong evidence that women's right to participate and own post-conflict reconstruction and transitional justice can be a reality. It just takes political will and tangible commitments.



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<sup>7</sup> Mutamba, J. & Izabiliza, J. (2005). *The Role of Women in Reconciliation and Peace Building in Rwanda: Ten Years after Genocide. 1994-2004. Contributions, Challenges and Way Forward, National unity and Reconciliation Commission, Kigali*

<sup>8</sup> Kantengwa, O., Interayamahanga, R., Mahoro, M. (2019). *The Role of Civil Society in Enhancing Citizen Participation in Governance and Development Processes in Post-Genocide Rwanda. Never Again Rwanda & Interpeace, Kigali*

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# RIGHTS, ACCOUNTABILITY AND JUSTICE:

## EXPLORING THE CHALLENGES IN ENSURING GLOBAL COMPLIANCE WITH PRINCIPLES TO COUNTER GLOBAL THREATS TO PEACE

Rights, accountability, and justice are critical for the prevention of conflict and violence, the building and sustaining of peace, and achievement of inclusive development. A lack of these principles leads to lawlessness that is prevailing across the world and destabilizing states and regions, thus threatening international peace and security. Genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity and other gross violations of human rights continue to undermine the fabric of entire societies, thus underlining the dire need to ensure global compliance with the principles of rights, accountability, and justice.

### Challenges in ensuring global compliance

One of the major challenges in ensuring global compliance, especially to the principle of rights is the difficulty in establishing a universal interpretation of human rights and what constitutes a breach across regions and cultures at global level.<sup>9</sup> Human rights are appreciated differently in light of differences in economic, political, social and cultural character of countries, thus resulting in varying perceptions of human rights between Western and non-Western societies.



<sup>9</sup> Donnelly, J (2007) "The Relative Universality of Human Rights". *Human Rights Quarterly* 29 (2) 281-306.

In addition to the aforementioned subjectivity of human rights, another challenge in ensuring global compliance to the principles of rights, accountability and justice is that international laws, unlike domestic laws are not enforced by a coercive sovereignty; meaning there is no global enforcement mechanism to ensure that states comply with these laws. Despite the increasing prevalence of international human rights treaties posing legal obligations on states, enforcement mechanisms are still lacking at the global level. In this case one might consider the International Criminal Court (ICC) as a global accountability and justice-serving mechanism to ensure global compliance to human rights; however, this court has its shortcomings and only deals with the grossest of violations such as genocide and war crimes.

As a result, the task of monitoring states' compliance to the principles of rights, accountability and justice strongly relies on self and peer reporting. The former creates a loophole where executive branches of states that are the prime violators have the option not to provide the information to international organizations and thus avoid consequences.<sup>10</sup> Even though international institutions are often able to induce states that have ratified the concerned treaties to comply by exerting pressure, and possibly sanctions, there is no global legally-binding enforcement mechanism to hold states accountable for violating their international human rights obligations and other global threats to peace.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Koh, H, H (1997) *Why do nations obey International Law?* *The Yale Law Journal* 106:2598-2659.

<sup>11</sup> Forsythe, D, P (2009) *Encyclopedia of Human Rights*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Additionally, the ideal of human rights and framework of international human rights law is contrary to the traditional concept of state sovereignty and thus considered subordinate to it.<sup>12</sup> For international human rights to be truly effective, national courts, governments and parliaments have to ensure that they adopt them into legislation, and civil societies have to mobilize and hold authorities accountable on that basis.<sup>13</sup>

There is a lack of interest for the states. Since a violation by a state of the rights of its own citizens does not infringe on the national interests of other parties to the agreement, the other parties are not compelled to scrutinize the violations.<sup>14</sup> This has been recorded in the past in countries like Rwanda during the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi, where other states failed to intervene and call for the former Genocidaire government to cease the violations and be held accountable for their actions. The failure of the other states to respond in a timely manner was ascribed to a lack of their self-interest represented in Rwanda at the time as guided by their foreign policies.

## Opportunities for change

To successfully ensure global compliance with these principles, states can integrate the pursuance of these principles into their national policies and the various policies in their international relations. As for the enforcement of compliance, individual states and other actors in the international fora ought to raise awareness and call for accountability by generating pressure.

<sup>12</sup> Landman, T (2008) *Measuring Human Rights*. London: Routledge.

<sup>13</sup> De Schutter, O (2010) *Ensuring compliance with international human rights law: The role of national authorities*. In *International Human Rights Law: Cases, Materials, Commentary* (pp. 729-790). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

<sup>14</sup> Henkin, L (n.d) *Compliance with International Human Rights Obligations*. Columbia Edu



However, it is important to acknowledge that the improvement of rights and accountability in a state is more dependent on the states' will.

For a successful transformative process and to address the current challenges to global compliance to human rights, accountability and justice, it is imperative to examine the patterns of past human rights violations in order to avoid letting the same violations go unaccounted for. Additionally, there is a strong need to find a framework that fits both the Western and non-Western perceptions of human rights in order to find a common ground and avoid policing of non-Western states to adhere to Western models that do not fit their political, social and cultural context.

We should keep in mind that it is easier said than done when it comes to ensuring global compliance to the principles of rights, accountability and justice especially given the complexities that are linked with establishing a global legally binding enforcement mechanism while respecting state sovereignty. Knowledge and capacity must be combined for effective implementation. Although capacity and knowledge on their own will not suffice where a government lacks political commitment to hold violators of these principles accountable. States need to develop their own capacity to investigate and prosecute violations of rights and injustice.<sup>15</sup> If need

<sup>15</sup> Pillay, N (n.d) *Establishing effective accountability mechanisms for human rights violations* [online] UN Chronicle.

be, states should set up national commissions of inquiry to respond to serious violations of rights and injustice. The international community can play a role in this process by supporting national accountability efforts without undermining them.

Global compliance to the principles of human rights, accountability and justice constitutes a central plank of countering global threats to peace.



**Jessica Mbanda**  
Communications and Content officer - Never Again Rwanda

# PEACE, JUSTICE & TECHNOLOGY

## THE DIGITALIZATION OF JUSTICE MOVEMENTS AROUND THE WORLD

The social media and digital revolution have brought us closer to each other than ever before. Distance nor the lines of social or economic class do not divide those on both sides of social debate. Appealing to one another for change has never been as easy or accessible as it is today. This has had a huge effect on the evolution of social justice movements in the digital age, as inter-connectivity has made the Internet the home of the modern-day justice movement.

From the #MeToo movement to the ongoing conversation on #BlackLivesMatter, the online presence of the modern justice movement

has broken barriers of ignorance as the conversation is brought to our timelines. There is no excuse for turning a blind eye when your online presence makes your silent complicity clear. Inter-connectivity forces us to reinterpret our principles of justice, and to be actively conscious of the societal ills that plague civilization.

Historic movements have long relied on traditional means to make the appeal that digitalization has made so accessible. From

Gandhi's civil disobedience Salt March to Martin Luther King's March on Washington, speeches in front of large audiences, community outreach, and coverage from traditional mass media have been the approaches towards forcing the conversation behind any movement. These approaches have not been lost on justice movements in the modern era. Marches and speeches still constitute the basis of any justice movement and going into the community to speak to residents is critical to understanding the politics of the area.

However, due to the limitless nature of the Internet, the life of justice movements now exists on the Internet. The digital landscape has provided a huge scale up in influence as



platforms like Twitter and Facebook have become the primary vehicle for progression and sustainability of any justice movement.

Petitions sites such as *change.org* are hubs of online activism; crowdsourcing platforms such as *gofundme.com* enable activists to garner financial support; and hashtags on social media platforms such as *Twitter* and *Facebook* have become the virtual homes of the movement, as activists organize protests and micro-blog to supporters of the cause.

This level of greater mobilization is a byproduct of the digital world. What used to be possible only through a huge amount of physical outreach and telephone activism is now made simple through a basic understanding of using the Internet. The modern-day activist can make huge waves with a simple Facebook post to the Internet community.

A study on the 2017 Women's March held on January 21<sup>st</sup>, which originated from a single Facebook post, estimates that more than 7 million people participated in Women's March events all over the world. Social media user Teresa Shook posted to a Facebook group, which developed into an event invite, and then to 10,000 people requesting to join the cause.

However, the ease of connection that the Internet has brought does raise questions on the commitment of those that do participate. 'Slacktivism' which is defined by the *United Nations* as "supporting a cause by performing simple measures" is highlighted as an issue with the digitalization of justice movements.

It is quite easy to feign support and passively participate by simply retweeting or liking a post. It does not reflect the necessary effort needed to really enforce and demand societal change. This criticism cannot be leveled towards civil rights activists like the late John Lewis, who in 1965 marched straight into state troopers in riot gear. They responded with bullwhips and rubber tubing wrapped in barbed wire. Most people who took part in traditional justice movements had much stronger purpose even if in much smaller numbers.

Purpose is what drives these movements for change, so if sections of the support are not fully devoted to the cause, it's possible that the message becomes diluted and lost within the noise. This was evident during the ongoing #BlackLivesMatter protests in the wake of George Floyd's murder.

The online community both corporate and individual took part in posting black screens

on their respective Instagram feeds under the hashtag #BlackoutTuesday. Brands including Spotify, Live Nation, Apple and TikTok ceased operations for the day to bring forward a unified moment of reflection on the situation. The vast majority of the online community followed suit, and soon there was deep criticism of the movement from prominent #BlackLivesMatter activists who said, "The hashtag is intentionally hiding critical information we are using on the ground and online." The scramble to take part in this simple activism had a detrimental effect on those truly devoted to the cause.

Inter-connectivity means modern justice movements are likely to continue to exist primarily on the Internet. Although lax participation can at times be a hindrance, a simple show of solidarity from those in your network can be a motivator in the progression of the movement.

As we continue our path towards a more connected globalization, let us see whether digitalization brings about greater change in justice movements or a heightened sense of division.

**Peter Ndahiro**  
Communications Designer

# YOUTH INCLUSION IN DECISION-MAKING PROCESSES

## RESOLUTION 2535: AFFIRMING THE VITAL ROLE OF YOUTH IN PEACE AND DECISION-MAKING PROCESSES

In 2017, I packed my bags and traveled to Rwamagana district in the Eastern province of Rwanda. I was going to attend my first ever boot camp, which I was excited for, from the day I registered. The camp is called Critical Thinking for Peace. The primary mission is to cultivate and empower a movement of the next generation of proactive citizens and peacebuilders. As future leaders, they taught us how to employ critical thinking and compassion to solve some of the most pressing challenges in our lives and respective communities. In all honesty, that is when I came to know the real meaning of the word 'peace'.

Through the different insightful sessions from various speakers, I realized that ending a conflict or a war does not necessarily bring peace and that the mere absence of war is not peace. I later come to know that peace demands humility and sacrifice from all. It requires the will to comprehend the root causes of conflict and to seek solutions to them.

I was introduced to the concept of being an active citizen in my community. When the facilitator introduced 'active citizenship', my thoughts gravitated to labeling it as politics. To my surprise, it was more interesting than politics, and more importantly, I got to know that I did not have to be in a leadership position to play my role in the advancement of the community. Understanding that engaging in the decision-making process helps me to build a foundation for the future I want to see, stirred something inside of me. I wish you could have seen me, right after the camp!

Since the rise of human civilization, people of different communities have undergone conflicts; some are protracted and destructive in nature and have resulted in gross human rights violations. Many nations have intensified efforts towards managing these conflicts, but this will not be fully achieved if the youth are not involved in such movements.

According to the Oxford Research Group from 2016, youth ought to be considered as agents of positive peace, since peace sustainability in our communities is hinged on their involvement.

What does it need for youth to play a vital role in building peace in their communities? For me, I have noticed the power in understanding the diversity across youth populations and the localized context critical for revealing comprehensive solutions that suit their needs. There is a need to engage youth in the decision-making process. If youth are placed at the center of the transformation, it is imperative also to engage them in decision-making processes.

During the camp I mentioned above, I was told to be a positive disruptor to boost my community's continuous development. But how can I disrupt old systems, policies, and others, if I am not positively engaged in such conversations? On the side of governments and other bodies, this strengthens the point of providing safe spaces for youth and being active citizens on the youth's side to participate in the decision-making process. It is a two-sided effort.

Engaging in the decision-making process in my community, empowers me to influence the decisions that affect my life, equips me with the knowledge and understanding of

the political, social, and economic context to make educated decisions. It is now more than ever where we can challenge existing structures.

I believe that It is imperative to engage youth in developmental considerations to enhance peace sustainability in our communities. If that is done, young people will have the ability to display opinions and share thoughts on participation, accountability, partnerships, and capacity building in the setting of transformative sustainable development agendas that are always in favor of our country's future development hence having peaceful communities.

**Robert Mugabo**

*Management student at the African Leadership University*

## MATERIALIZING YOUTH PARTICIPATION IN PEACE AND DECISION- MAKING PROCESSES



Despite broad agreement that youth engagement is important in forging sustainable peace and development, young people are often not given the opportunity to participate in public discourse and decision-making. Youth make up more than half of the population in many countries, but they often find themselves intentionally excluded in many processes that have an impact on their lives. Due to their perceived lack of skills and experience, they often find it difficult to gain the respect of officials and meaningfully engage in political activity, which could otherwise lead to positive change in their communities<sup>16</sup>.

Today it is becoming increasingly important that, rather than seeing young people as agents of conflict and destruction, they are seen as agents of peace, intercultural and interreligious dialogue, and advocates for social cohesion in their communities<sup>17</sup>.

In 2015, the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) unanimously adopted Resolution 2250,<sup>18</sup> which urges Member States to increase the representation of youth in decision making at all levels. In July 2020, the UNSC also underlined the vital role of youth

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.ndi.org/what-we-do/youth-political-participation>

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.youthpolicy.org/blog/development/african-youth-as-peacebuilders-a-viewpoint/>

<sup>18</sup> United Nations Security Council (2015). Resolution 2250 (2015). Adopted by the Security Council at its 7573rd meeting, on 9 December 2015.

in building peace, unanimously adopting the Resolution 2535 (2020)<sup>19</sup>. According to a press release about the meeting, the UNSC “called on all relevant actors to increase the inclusive representation of youth for the prevention and resolution of conflict, as well as in Peacebuilding, including when negotiating and implementing peace agreements”.

Despite such strong commitments, youth around the world still face a number of issues, like unemployment, depression, limited education opportunities, gender-based violence and political manipulation among so many others, which deeply affect their confidence and capacity to participate in policy and decision making processes.

The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that approximately 16 million girls aged 15 to 19 years and 2.5 million girls under 16 years of age give birth in developing regions<sup>20</sup>. This leads to high school dropouts; severe trauma; lack of livelihoods and job opportunities; stigma and rejection from family, peers, and community. Such factors prevent these youth from exercising their full potential in the political, social, and economic development of their communities. It is

<sup>19</sup> United Nations <https://www.un.org/press/en/2020/sc14251.doc.htm>

<sup>20</sup> [www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/adolescent-pregnancy](http://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/adolescent-pregnancy)

therefore imperative to note that the absence of youth voices makes it difficult to design policies and programs that adequately respond to their needs, particularly in post-conflict contexts.

However, youth continue to be victims of political manipulation and conflicts in some countries, while in others, youth have been given an opportunity to play a commendable role in varied spheres of their nations. For example, in Rwanda the legal, institutional and policy frameworks are in favor of youth participation in policy and decision-making processes. The Rwandan Constitution of 2003, as reviewed in 2015, provides a special seat for youth in parliament. Article 75 (3°) allocates two deputies elected by the National Youth Council (NYC). Also, the Government of Rwanda has established the Ministry of Youth and Culture, and fully functioning National Youth Council with committee structures from the national level to the local government level down to the village level.

There is a political will to empower youth to take up leadership positions. Every year, the President meets youth through the “Meet the President” forum, where he urges them

to prepare themselves to take on leadership responsibilities. “You are the ministers, presidents and leaders of tomorrow. Rwanda expects a lot from each of you. Now is the time to prepare for that role. It is now, it is you.” President Paul Kagame said, on August 19, 2018. Just as they have been greatly mobilized, youth in Rwanda demonstrate the willingness and commitment to contribute to the development of their country.

For example, a majority of youth are contributing their efforts, by establishing youth peace clubs and associations, starting up campaigns in their respective communities, creating new jobs, communal activities, taking up leadership positions, among others. As the country grappled with COVID-19, youth actively engaged in the fight against the spread of the pandemic, as volunteers.

In a bid to amplify the role of youth in peace, policy and decision making, there is a strong need for local leaders to develop strategies and approaches to include youth in the planning, implementation and evaluation of programs rather than sporadic mobilization of youth when they need their support. Non-state actors ought to document and advocate for issues affecting youth’s participation in

decision-making and peace programs. There is a need for continuous capacity building of youth, such as mentoring schemes and opportunities for community service, which can enable youth to become leaders and actors for constructive change.

Youth are called upon to be responsible and to take up initiatives to solve issues in their communities, like establishing income-generating activities, volunteering, and participating in national programs. Also, awareness needs to be raised among families on the role of youth participation in socio-economic transformation, so that parents can effectively educate their children about their rights, roles, and responsibilities.

National, and international instruments on citizen participation in democratic governance should be widely disseminated, so as to ensure that all citizens, especially youth, understand the need for their meaningful involvement in Peacebuilding, political, social and economic spheres.

**Celestin Nsengiyumva**  
*Head of programs - Never Again Rwanda*

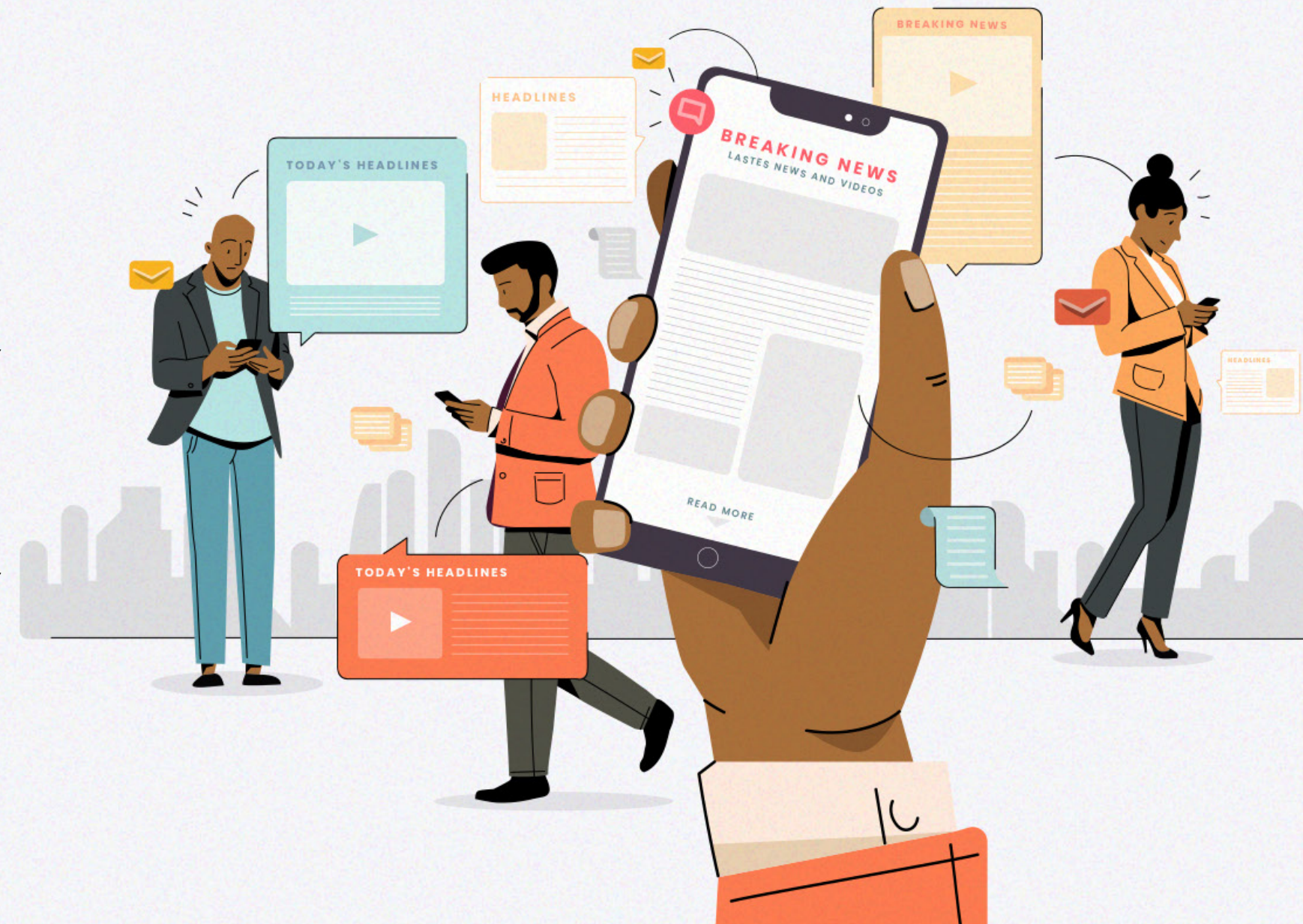
# THE ROLE OF THE MEDIA IN PROMOTING SOCIAL JUSTICE, PEACE AND GOVERNANCE

## A SIMPLE NOTE TO POLICY MAKERS AND DEVELOPMENT PRACTITIONERS

Today the world is encountering remarkable challenges in promoting social justice governance, democracy, transparency, press freedom and economic development. Social Justice is essential for the long-term sustainable development of any nation. The media, as an important information source, plays a crucial role in shaping a healthy democracy and a socially just community. I can state without fear, that there exists a dilemma in conceptualizing social justice and peace. Political leaders and other actors like scholars, civil servants, and international development organizations confront such challenges by defining social justice, peace and good governance within their interests and scope of work.

There has been little systematic effort to holistically explore the nexus involving the media, social justice, and governance. With the spread of modern communication technology and the existence of an unfettered and independent press, the media is essential for democratization and guaranteeing good governance through freedom of expression, transparency, accountability, rule of law and providing a pluralist platform for political expression about controversial issues. The media therefore frames and influences public perception of social justice and good governance.

For instance, in Uganda, our media has tried tremendously to play the role of watchdog. Some vigilant press actors have proved capable



of monitoring political officials and institutions that are supposed to remain transparent and accountable, because citizens believe that the press should inform them about government misdeeds. A lot of investigative journalism efforts have helped unearth wrongdoing by public officials and I think this is commendable because it allows us to nurture a culture of transparency and accountability by exposing corruption, maladministration, and abuse of power.

An organized media is very crucial in civically informing citizens about their freedoms and responsibilities. It can be a civic forum for political debate, facilitating informed citizens' political knowledge and political efficacy. In this way, the media plays a critical role in connecting the state and citizens through debates and discussions about major political and social issues, as well as informing the public about the stance of their leaders on such issues. If channels of communication reflect the cultural and social pluralism and diversity of society, then various opinions and voices could be represented and heard in the public sphere. This is crucial for any society.

In this sense, a free and independent press encourages the development of a rational and informed public opinion, which is also helpful to check state power.

As agenda setters, the media has the power to set a nation's agenda and divert public attention to certain key political issues. I have seen this happen. Without pointing at specific incidents, not only do citizens acquire information about public affairs from the media, but they also learn how much importance to attach to an issue according to the emphasis the news media has placed on specific issues or events. The media playing the agenda-setting role in democracies is ideally expected to inform elected officials about public concerns by raising

their awareness on such issues. In terms of developing countries for instance, the press is considered to play a more important role in highlighting crucial issues, which require urgent action taken by either the government or other development actors, making their decisions more effective and responsive to the social needs.

I also think that from an advocacy point of view, the media may also pressure the government to quickly respond and take effective actions to solve certain dramatic political controversies such as scandals, corruption, and political crises, etc.

Therefore, the media being a watchdog, civic forum and agenda-setter, promotes social justice and good governance by facilitating government transparency and accountability, checking of the abuse of power, strengthening the public sphere and highlighting policy failures, maladministration, scandal and corruption by decision-makers within both the public and private domain, and this goes far in spurring development.

All actors in any of these spheres must thus appreciate this reality and seek to facilitate the same. Citizens must always be alert to make the best use of the media output. Leaders must always ensure that they steer clear, since their output is what the media amplifies to the public. The media itself must take this opportunity, to occupy its right place, appreciate the role it plays and be intentional in promoting social justice, transparency, accountability, peace and good governance for the good of society.

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# URGENT NEED TO ADDRESS THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON AFRICA'S YOUTH EMPLOYMENT

Sub-Saharan Africa's population is becoming more youthful. According to the United Nations, there were over 200 million youth aged 15-24 in Africa as of 2015, a number that is expected to continue to grow throughout the remainder of the 21st century.<sup>21</sup>

Of Africa's unemployed, 60% are young people. Youth unemployment rates are double those of adult unemployment in most African countries. The problem of unemployment in Africa is certainly huge, but there's another much-ignored growing trend of educated but jobless, youth, which is a dangerous category that governments must address. Africa's youth population is not only growing rapidly, but also getting better educated. Based on current trends, 59% of 20-24-year olds will have had secondary education in 2030, compared to 42% today<sup>22</sup>.

The pandemic has made things worse. Many young people have lost their livelihoods since they are in informal sectors - almost 80% of working youth in Africa are engaged in the informal sector<sup>23</sup> whether in agriculture or informal manufacturing and services among other services. The informal sector has been the most affected by the pandemic. No doubt, COVID-19 has increased youth unemployment in Africa.

For instance, Nigeria was looking to the agriculture sector to decrease oil dependency and young people were beginning to embrace it,

<sup>21</sup> <https://www.un.org/en/africa/osaa/peace/youth.shtml>

<sup>22</sup> [https://essa-africa.org/scholarships\\_impact#:~:text=59%25%20of%20the%20regions%202020,are%20to%20meet%20this%20demand.](https://essa-africa.org/scholarships_impact#:~:text=59%25%20of%20the%20regions%202020,are%20to%20meet%20this%20demand.)

<sup>23</sup> [https://www.afdb.org/fileadmin/uploads/afdb/Images/high\\_5s/Job\\_youth\\_Africa\\_Job\\_youth\\_Africa.pdf](https://www.afdb.org/fileadmin/uploads/afdb/Images/high_5s/Job_youth_Africa_Job_youth_Africa.pdf)

but the COVID-19 period has taken them back to square one.

Zambia has been facing a critically high youth unemployment problem. For a long time, the country relied on copper to fuel economic growth. The country has watched its economy rise and fall with the highs and lows of the international price for copper, which accounts for a massive 70% of the country's exports. The government has been trying to diversify the economy by prioritizing agriculture, labor-intensive sectors and entrepreneurship as a solution to youth unemployment. COVID-19 has led to dramatic unemployment.

COVID-19 is not just a public health issue. The bigger challenge is that it is a potential security threat. COVID-19 has led to increased youth unemployment in Africa – millions of jobs in Africa are threatened by the COVID-19 crisis. With youth unemployment twice that of adults, the potential for social unrest is real – large-scale youth unemployment could lead to unrest. Rebuilding hope



among the youth is a very important step, as the starting point. Most importantly, governments must enable and support ideas by the young people.

For Example: In Liberia, the Government established a 'National Youth Task Force Against COVID-19' as part of the efforts to help contain the spread and address the impact of coronavirus. They are looking at specific solutions that address the challenge of pandemic in relation to the youth. In Gambia, young entrepreneurs with tailoring skills are being engaged to help meet the urgent demand for protective facemasks. This support to entrepreneurs is creating opportunities to mitigate the economic impact.

Governments and other actors should support, engage and provide opportunities to the youth. Noteworthy, there are no shortages of policies across Africa targeted at young people. Implementation of these policies has been the biggest challenge...political will and follow up is key. While governments have the primary responsibility to create the best environment for youth, young people have a role to play.

The issue of high unemployment has been with us for a while, but young people can use this COVID-19 period to think outside the box and not just rely on the government. Young people with innovative ideas need to organize themselves at the local level. They have a stronger voice when approaching investors or development partners... to explain the challenges they face and solutions they have. Also, strategies to youth unemployment must be both short and long term – how youth can survive and improve their livelihoods now and post-COVID. Most important, it's time for the private sector to activate the corporate social responsibility to support youth employment and entrepreneurship.

Countries and territories such as South Africa, Botswana, Swaziland, the Republic of Congo, Senegal, Angola, Namibia, and Nigeria have among the highest unemployment rates in the continent. Also, Northern Africa exhibits high youth unemployment rates. Rwanda and Uganda are among the countries in Africa recording the lowest youth unemployment rate.

A number of African governments have made some efforts to tackle youth unemployment – but a lot more still need to be done. Ghana for example created a national youth service and empowerment program to help young people find jobs. Mauritius, Kenya, and Morocco have developed programs that encourage technical and vocational education for young people. Zambia introduced a national youth policy and youth enterprise fund to stimulate job creation. Rwanda has put youth and jobs at the center of its national development. Uganda is supporting more young people to delve into agriculture hence bridging the gap between job opportunities in the formal and informal job sectors. Such initiatives need to be encouraged and scaled up.

Noteworthy, youth employment requires intelligent policies based on a sound understanding of the issues that the young face in finding, and holding on to, decent employment opportunities.

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# GEOPOLITICS AFTER COVID-19

For the past several months, the world has been dealing with one of the most serious global pandemics in history — COVID-19. One of the reasons the virus became so dangerous is how fast it spread across the globe. This global crisis has not only affected human lives, but also the economy and politics of developed and developing countries alike, thus affecting geopolitics in the process. Geopolitics is a type of politics especially in terms of international relations as influenced by geographical factors, these factors can be physical or human. What will geopolitics look like after COVID-19?

Geopolitics will be affected differently depending on the duration and depth of the crisis. The world will experience either more cooperation or more division among states or groups of states and this will go on for an undefined period. The pandemic is certainly going to affect the global order—like the plague contributing to the rise and fall of great powers, this virus will also cause a significant shift in power in today's world.

Nevertheless, as things are unfolding, a more divided world is what is anticipated according to some scholars. With less cooperation, there will be more rivalry among superpowers, for example, China and the United States. Rivalry is the first sign of a less cooperative world after COVID-19 and we can see it even today during the pandemic. Super powers such as China and the United States have been rivals for a while now; however, this rivalry seems to have intensified since the beginning of the pandemic, both economically and politically. Each wants to lead the world to recovery in order to increase their global political influence.

With less cooperation comes weak international relations; nations are counting on themselves to get through this pandemic. This every man

for themselves attitude will create weak international relations between many nations since they have had to help themselves in critical moments like these, especially members of the European Union, such as Italy, Spain and others. This will likely lead to de-globalization.

On the other hand, there are other specialists or scholars who claim that the coronavirus crisis will push the international system towards cooperation rather than competition and conflicts. We can see that the cooperation is already in the making as we observe the flow of information, experiences, and mutual medical assistance among countries. They believe that the post-corona world will not tolerate competition, rather promote solidarity at the national and international level.

The world is facing a common enemy; each country should redefine its local interests at least during this pandemic, to make sure that they are in line with the rest of the world since we all have a common goal to achieve—eradicating the virus.

The only sure thing is that the coronavirus crisis is going to affect the global order one way or another. Whether international relations among the countries head towards more cooperation or more competition and conflicts, that is still an unsettled conclusion.

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# TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS



## CHALLENGES IN INVESTIGATION, PROSECUTION, AND VICTIM ASSISTANCE

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) summarizes trafficking in persons as the acquisition of people by improper means such as force, fraud, or deception, intending to exploit them. Trafficking in persons, considered a modern form of slavery, is widely prevalent across the world. According to the International Labour Organization, around 40.3 million people fell prey to this modern form of slavery in 2016 and about 25% of these victims were children.

Trafficking in persons has also been reported in Rwanda. A study conducted by Never Again Rwanda reveals that 515 victims of trafficking in persons were recorded by the Directorate General and Emigration and Immigration (DGIE) in 2017. Human trafficking is indeed a complex crime that poses unique challenges in its investigation and prosecution as well as the provision of assistance to victims.

Regarding investigating the crime of trafficking in persons, there are a number of challenges. Firstly, trafficking in persons is an organized crime that is committed secretly. This makes detecting the crime—let alone investigating it—very difficult. Secondly, the crime of trafficking in persons involves a huge amount of money and often traffickers give money to unsuspecting victims, while falsely promising more opportunities in the destination countries. Thirdly, the recruiters and victims often know each other very well and have a relationship, which creates a sense of trust among the potential victims. Furthermore, limited knowledge about the crime of trafficking in persons among the general population renders potential victims blind to the warning signs and indicators of trafficking in persons. As a result, during investigations, the victims of trafficking in persons are often initially reluctant to cooperate with investigators.

Prosecuting the crime of trafficking in persons has proven quite a challenge. According to Research conducted by Never Again Rwanda,<sup>24</sup> 25% of the trafficking in persons cases received by the National Public Prosecution Authority could not make it to trial and sadly as a result, they were dropped. The overarching challenge in prosecuting the crime of trafficking in persons is insufficient evidence. Gathering evidence for the crime of trafficking in persons has proven to be a daunting task due to several reasons. To begin with, since the crime of trafficking in persons is partly transnational, in some instances the traffickers coordinate the whole operation outside the country of origin using social media platforms such as Whatsapp and Facebook. Therefore, in some cases, the prosecutors find themselves with victims of trafficking but not their traffickers. In a bid for the investigators and prosecutors

<sup>24</sup> [https://neveragainrwanda.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/NAR.IOM\\_GOV\\_Understanding-Human-Trafficking-in-Rwanda-Causes-Effects-and-Impact-Baseline-Report.pdf](https://neveragainrwanda.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/NAR.IOM_GOV_Understanding-Human-Trafficking-in-Rwanda-Causes-Effects-and-Impact-Baseline-Report.pdf)

to apprehend the traffickers, they face challenges of limited or lack of cooperation with some countries, language barriers, and a discrepancy in laws and culture. One example is the Kafala system<sup>25</sup>, which ties immigrant workers, especially live-in maids, to employers for the whole period of stay regardless of their employment conditions. This practice is legal in many countries in West Asia to monitor migrant labor; however, it leaves room for employers to exploit their workers.

An extra issue is the restricted information and limit of cutting-edge specialists to arrange the required proof. The research conducted by Never Again Rwanda revealed a discrepancy between the investigators and prosecutors. While the investigators gripe and express disappointment that prosecutors are letting traffickers go free, the prosecutors attest that in such cases, the proof accumulated by investigators is insufficient to warrant a trial.

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<sup>25</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kafala\\_system#:~:text=The%20kafala%20system%20\(also%20spelled,neighbouring%20countries%2C%20namely%20Bahrain%2C%20Kuwait](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kafala_system#:~:text=The%20kafala%20system%20(also%20spelled,neighbouring%20countries%2C%20namely%20Bahrain%2C%20Kuwait)

Assistance to the victims of trafficking in persons, enshrined in article six of the Palermo, also poses a number of challenges. Victim assistance is diverse and involves different activities namely the provision of shelter, medical care, legal services, and material support. Considering the nature of trafficking in persons, provision of victim assistance such as mental health care, that is often needed to treat psychological trauma, requires specialized personnel and is offered over an extended period for the victims to heal.

Furthermore, victims of trafficking in persons need material support, not only to ease their reintegration back in the community, but also to prevent instances of potential double victimization where they may fall prey to trafficking again due to harsh conditions. Therefore, the biggest challenge encountered in the provision of assistance to victims of trafficking in persons is limited material and financial resources.

Combating trafficking in persons is a complex endeavor and calls for a comprehensive, multi-sectoral approach involving different actors including, among others, public institutions, the private sector, and the civil society. Specifically, efforts should target awareness-raising among the community, capacity building of law enforcement agencies on the crime of trafficking in persons, pooling resources to strengthen the area of victim assistance, and strengthening international cooperation regarding combating trafficking in persons.

**NO ONE IS FREE  
UNTIL WE ARE  
ALL FREE**



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