TRIP REPORT

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FORWARD

Over the next few years, the Government of Rwanda is facing numerous challenges, including commitments to hold national elections, moving forward with a major land reform program, the drafting of a new constitution, and bringing to justice (through the Gacaca process) those charged with participation in the Rwandan genocide. The July 30th agreement between the Governments of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda on a framework for implementation of the Lusaka Accord is a welcome development. However, implementation of the MOU between the two governments will require considerable management time and effort to ensure that the agreement succeeds. It is also essential that the agreement receive early and sustained political and financial support from the international community. In addition, substantial additional resources will be required by both Rwanda and the Congo for demobilization and reintegration programs.

At the request of the Assistant Administrator for DCHA, in coordination with the Assistant Administrator for Africa, a review team was sent to Rwanda July 9-20. The team was comprised of Dick McCall, Senior Advisor to the Administrator for Conflict Management/Mitigation, Sharon Isralow of the Africa Bureau's SD Office, and Jack and Christine Hjelt, retired USAID employees with extensive on the ground experience and knowledge of Rwanda. The team was tasked with:

- Evaluating the progress being made in moving the Gacaca process forward to deal with the genocide caseload;
- Evaluating the implementation of the War Torn Societies Project International and the importance of the processes facilitated by WSPI in dealing with the challenges faced by the people of Rwanda in the foreseeable future;
- Evaluating the proposed national elections including the degree to which Rwandans have been able to deal effectively with the legacy of genocide, particularly in the Rwandan's goal of creating a non-sectarian society;
- Evaluating the proposed land reform program currently being discussed and developed by the GOR.

In addition, the review team engaged in detailed discussions with the USAID Mission on the proposed multi-donor rural public works program, private sector initiatives, and the recently completed draft of the Rwanda Conflict Vulnerability Assessment undertaken by a team from MSI. The team had extensive meetings with a wide variety of Rwandans, both private citizens and government officials and undertook two field trips to Gitarama and Kigali-Ngali.

FINDINGS

This review mission occurred at a very propitious moment, coming on the eve of renewed peace talks between the Government of Rwanda and the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. In exchanges we had with numerous government officials and ordinary citizens, the continued security threat posed by ex-Far and Interahamwe forces operating in the Congo, and with it the legitimization of the ideology of genocide permeating the region, weighed very heavily on decisions about Rwanda's future. The MOU that has been signed by the two governments could help address some of these concerns and allow Rwanda to focus even more attention on domestic reforms. Successful implementation, however, will require strong and sustained political and financial support, initially to implement the agreement, and then to assist with the demobilization and reintegration of thousands of Rwandans.

It has been eight short years since the international community stood on the sidelines as one of the most horrible genocides in modern history unfolded before our very eyes. An estimated one million Rwandans, mostly of Tutsi origin, were slaughtered by a labor-intensive killing machine unleashed by elements of the then-government in power. Numerous moderate Hutus fell victim to the senseless butchery as well. The actual numbers of those killed most probably will never be known with any certainty. To this day, mass graves continue to be discovered.

When the new Rwandan Government of National Unity took office in 1994, they faced a number of daunting challenges. The International Monetary Fund staff report for the 1995 Article IV Consultation and Use of Fund Resources under the Compensatory and Contingency Financing Facility painted this grim picture of post-genocide Rwanda:

The events of 1994 "… resulted in unprecedented loss of human life, substantial disruption of social and economic infrastructure, and a decline of over one half in aggregate output. About one million persons perished, some two million Rwandese citizens are still outside the country, and the country's skilled personnel virtually disappeared. A large part of Rwanda's infrastructure is still in a state of disrepair; government ministries, key institutions, and some economic enterprises are in the difficult phase of restarting operations; and a number of financial institutions as well as many public enterprises are still closed, with little prospect of reopening."

The administrative system from the national government ministries all the way down to the communes had collapsed completely. Every level of civilian administration was stripped of every desk, chair, computer, typewriter, file, window, plumbing fixture, paper, pencil, and doors (including the frames). There was little equipment, livestock or rolling stock left in the country.

The rearming and training of the ex-Far and Interahamwe continued from their bases, particularly in then-Zaire. Cross border raids aimed at economic sabotage and elimination of the witnesses to the genocide and those cooperating with the new government continued until the so-called refugee camps were broken up in the fall of 1996.

This was the situation facing the new Government of National Unity. The challenge for the government was complicated further by the fact that, from 1995 until present, it has had to struggle with an international community that was reluctant to accept what happened in Rwanda as an extraordinary event, the consequences of which have dictated the day-to-day realities of that country. Nonetheless this government has proceeded with what have been widely well-received programs to rebuild the economy and the infrastructure of the nation, despite limited external resources. It is rather remarkable what the government has been able to accomplish given what they inherited, particularly in light of the continued security threat from the Congo.

George Bernard Shaw once observed that the lesson of history is that we ignore the lessons of history. History plays a very critical role in Rwanda. It is not one history, but a multiplicity of histories that may differ from region to region and even colline to colline. It is this highly personalized history, but with a collective mentality, that informs and shapes the views of a society that is 70 percent illiterate with 90 percent of its people living in the rural areas. It is a society throughout the independence period (and before) that has been insulated and isolated from the outside world and rarely exposed to competing ideas or value systems. In other words, Rwanda has been a society easily susceptible to manipulation and control by a rigid authoritarian command and control governance structure. In the United States, our Founding Fathers determined that we would be a nation of laws and not of men. In pre-genocide Rwanda, it was a nation of men and not of laws. There was no higher authority than the ruler/rulers -- not even God, a seemingly perplexing contradiction in a nation with supposedly strong religious roots across most of society. Yet, this is the reality if one is to understand the nature of the challenge facing Rwandans of all backgrounds--it is the challenge of overcoming a history that inexorably led to a catastrophic mass murder in 1994.

Since the end to the Cold War, the international community has struggled to respond to an increasing number of failed or failing states. The logic of democratization and market economics has driven the notion that many societies are in transition -- that there is somewhat of a linear progression from centrally controlled political and economic systems to democratic and free market driven systems. What is becoming increasingly apparent is that in most so-called transition countries such as Rwanda, and difficult and patient societal transformation is the more appropriate description of the processes required for peace, stability and political pluralism to be established and sustained over the long term. Transformation is not limited just to economic and political change. The requirement for psychological transformation is fundamental to the realization of the political and economic change that maximizes human potential, freedom and capital formation in these countries. A society acculturated to following orders with

unquestioning obeisance to authority poses a difficult challenge, particularly for a society coming out of conflict and genocide.

The team had two lengthy debriefings conducted by the staff of the Institute of Research and Dialogue for Peace (IRDP), the Rwandan counterpart of War Torn Societies Project International (WSPI). WSPI uses the participatory action research methodology that is indigenized through partner organizations comprised of a cross section of highly respected individuals within crisis or post-conflict societies. The methodology requires astute and explicit analysis of political and social trends, a capacity and willingness to address difficult issues respectfully and firmly with local partners, and a willingness to work with a broad range of social actors for the long run. The process depends on listening carefully to the voices of the people – voices that eventually determine the research agenda.

The initial process and preliminary research has been conducted in almost half of Rwanda's eleven provinces. The IRDP team will cover all eleven provinces. While it is too early to draw detailed conclusions that are applicable countrywide, there is the common theme that emerges of a society that has been conditioned never to question orders from authorities and that remains susceptible to doing so even today.

As a result of the de-briefing and intensive discussions with the IRDP team, we gained a greater appreciation for the complexity of the psychological dynamics at work within Rwandan society. We also came away with a deep concern that conflict vulnerability assessments and frameworks do not accurately capture these societal dynamics, a point we will discuss in greater detail later in this report.

For much of the international community, eight years is a long time since that fateful date of April 6, 1994 when the killing machine was unleashed. For most Rwandans, the genocide is yesterday. For too many, the sight of so many mutilated bodies, including loved ones, is etched in their memories and with it a fear that at the snap of a finger mass murder can once again visit the collines of Rwanda. The psychological impact of such a mass killing has been compounded by the horrendous mass movements and relocations of most of the population caused by civil war, the genocide, and the aftermath of both that also has created serious psycho-social problems. In addition, thousands of Rwandan returnees, many born and raised abroad because of the country's violent past, have added yet another social and political dimension to the nations' fragile psychological state. The international community debates the quality of elections in Rwanda, the shape of the proposed Constitution, concerns over the lack of press freedom, a controlled environment for political party participation, and the deficiencies (by Western standards) of the Gacaca process. Yet, there is a consensus among most Rwandans that fear of the past (the past 40 years for the Tutsis and the more distant past for the Hutus) is omnipresent. For many Rwandans, to ignore this lesson of history is to do so at their own peril.

Current Challenges

The Government of Rwanda has committed itself to an ambitious set of undertakings between now and 2004. The Gacaca trials will be well underway, a new Constitution will be written, debated, and adopted; land reform legislation will be drafted; efforts will be made to strengthen decentralized governance; a rural poverty alleviation program will be initiated; and national elections initiated in the fall of 2003. In the meantime, the governments of Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo will have to manage a peace process that is complex and which could be easily derailed in the absence of a strong engagement with both governments on the part of the international community. The effective demobilization and reintegration of ex-Far and Interahamwe forces (as well as RPA forces) if the peace process is successful will stretch thin resources even further. Successful implementation of the new agreement and consequent demobilization and reintegration will bring additional dynamics to an already demanding transformation process.

There was a consensus at all levels of society (including Liprodor, an independent human rights organization) that Rwandans enjoyed internal peace and security for the first time when the Northwest was secured in 1998 from ex-Far and Interahamwe infiltrators operating from sanctuaries in the Congo. As should be expected, there are also varying levels of anxiety and apprehension within society. For example, some voice concerns over whether political and independent media space is being constricted and what this portends for civil society. In addition there are reports of incidents involving criminal activity on the part of some members of the local defense forces that are selected by local communities.

Gacaca

In the post-genocide period, the government has struggled with how to manage a growing caseload of individuals alleged to have participated in some way, shape or form in the mass killing. Since the justice system that existed in the pre-genocide era never produced justice or a society governed by the rule of law, the new Government of Rwanda was faced with the challenge of constructing institutions from scratch. However, the dearth of trained lawyers, including prosecutors, defense attorneys, magistrates, and investigators, and the lack of basic infrastructure (courtrooms, filing cabinets, file folders, etc) presented the Government with an impossible task in dealing with the genocide caseload in an expeditious manner. Gacaca, the traditional local mechanism in Rwanda for settling civil disputes, was selected as the only viable basis for dealing with what had become an intolerable problem. A “Gacaca process,” as enacted into law by the National Assembly, has become the vehicle for dealing with the thousands of prisoners being held in Rwandan prison on genocide charges.

Various human rights organizations and some donors have questioned the pitfalls of utilizing the Gacaca process to deliver justice for both the accused and families of the victims. Concerns have been raised about the lack of due process, the absence of defense counsel, insufficiently trained local magistrates, and potentially inadequate case file management. Concerns also have been raised over potential threats to witnesses, the

survivors, and magistrates themselves (including the potential for bribes that could influence or prejudice judicial decisions). Finally, there is the uncertainty as to whether revenge seeking against the accused could emerge if there is the perception that justice has not been served.

The team visited a prison in Kigali Ngali where 55 percent of the estimated 7,000 prisoners being held on genocide-related charges had confessed. The visit was an opportunity to compare the demeanor of the inmates to those in similar facilities that were visited by McCall three years ago. The atmosphere was very relaxed in contrast to the visible tension one could sense among the inmates during previous visits. We attribute this difference substantially to the prisoners' understanding of, and comfort with, the traditional justice system and adjusted Gacaca justice mechanism, and the educational work initiated by the Government to explain how the system will work. Understanding of the process by both prisoners and the general population is critical, particularly since the traditional process has rarely been used for judging criminal offenses.

An internal reconciliation commission has been formed among the prisoners. In addition, there is a Gacaca Committee comprised of prisoners. Gacaca courses are held every day where they meet and discuss the process. The prisoners have been organized according to their home villages and local zones. The prisoners have prepared a written list of people accused in these areas and the names of those killed. They then identify who did the killing, how they carried out the killing(s), who was killed, and with whom they collaborated. Prisoners have a right to refute allegations. There is a small secretariat of the prisoners who compile and manage the individual dossiers with some professional assistance.

Jean Baptiste, the local representative in charge of the prison Gacaca committee, explained that a summary of these reports is compiled, including a list of prisoners who have never been accused of any crime. The files are then sent to the Parque, and these will be the files used in the trials. Jean Baptiste explained that files had been completed in 36 sectors and that the remaining 10 sectors were to be completed shortly. The prison committee had good support from the Provincial government in getting the necessary paper and pens. "We are committed to this process," Jean Baptiste emphasized.

The Director of the prison said there had been very few escapes (there are 50 guards for a prison population of 7,000) and when these rare occasions occur, the escapees usually return. Now that the process has been clearly explained, "there are now people who are not in prison admitting crimes they committed."

"The prisoners will not be going back home alone. They will be coming back to their families," the Prison Director said. "The communities are prepared for the return. For many of the accused, the time they have served in prison already will be penalty enough."

The GOR views the Gacaca process as producing both justice and reconciliation. As one member of the team observed: "In light of the magnitude of the crimes committed

against humanity, the Gacaca process goes beyond justice; it combines justice with mercy." This was a sentiment shared by all of us. It is important that the Gacaca process be seen in the context of the unique history of Rwanda, rather than through the lens of Western jurisprudence. Gacaca is not a process exclusively aimed at legal remedies only. It is a psychological, social, cultural and legal effort that may create some elements of trust, confidence, justice and tolerance among a people and country in search of transformation.

Certainly, one should not rush to judgement on the basis of visiting one prison. There most assuredly will be problems. But our sense is that the government and the communities want to mitigate and remedy any problems as they surface during the process. In this regard, we have a number of recommendations that we think will assist the Gacaca process to run as smoothly as possible.

USAID should support the baseline study and ongoing monitoring process undertaken by the Unity and Reconciliation Commission (URC). The URC, with the support of the International Rescue Committee (IRC), is monitoring the dynamics of Gacaca and translating these dynamics into a useable database that will enable the government to make adjustments to the process if necessary. An example would include tracking potential problems at the local level, particularly in the reintegration process once prisoners are released, thereby enabling the URC to intervene quickly to defuse problems. As a management tool, this will assist the URC in modifying and refining its work to facilitate reconciliation and unity within society. We recommend $75,000 be provided to this effort.

In addition, to what USAID/Rwanda is already providing the Gacaca process, additional logistical and material support should be given to help cover travel costs for judges, paper and other materials necessary for trial records and secure storage of the files.

Additional resources for these needs should be forthcoming from USAID/W and such support should be provided in a way that does not overtax the Mission.

War Torn Societies Project International

Most members of the team were familiar with War Torn Societies Project International (WSPI) programs in Somaliland, Puntland, Somalia, Mozambique, Guatemala, Eritrea and Macedonia. Therefore, it was with much anticipation that we met with the WSPI's Rwandan counter-part, a remarkable national team comprising the Institute for Research on Dialogue and Peace IDRP). The team is in the very early stages of elaborating what is a patient, inclusive, participatory and consensual process that has in other post-conflict societies not only created neutral spaces for participation, but also has frequently produced important data critical to sound policy judgements.

The leader of the team is a professor, an unusual find who is part academic, part mentor and an amazing historian. He is an economist who acts more like a social anthropologist.

He knows the folklore behind virtually every colline in Rwanda. Clearly his age, experience and presence are considerable assets.

He is joined by a very diverse team, that includes all ethnic backgrounds; gender balance; rural/urban representation; regional, political, and religious differences; varying educational backgrounds; new comers; old timers; returnees; and Rwanda's only resident psychiatrist. This impressively cohesive and collegial team is engaged in participatory action research at the grassroots level.

Of equal importance is the make-up of the Rwandan Advisory Board selected by the IRDP team. Several political parties are represented on the Board and the religious, regional, gender and ethnic make up reflects the diversity of the team itself. For example the daughter of a former Rwandan Prime Minister (a post April 8, 1994 genocidaire) is a board member and a very forceful advocate of reconciliation and a more open and inclusive society. It should also be noted that while IRDP is an independent effort, it has the support of the government leadership who have agreed to give the team the political space it needs to undertake sensitive grass roots investigations and eventual district and national meetings.

We traveled to Gitarama for an extensive wrap-up session of the team's weeklong discussions in two districts. Another meeting was held in Kigali where we discussed the team's initial findings for both Ruhengeri and Kigali Ngali. The initial research will be conducted in all of Rwanda's provinces. Contact points are established in each district and the team will report back what they had recorded from the participants to ensure it is an actual reflection of what was articulated.

Following this round of research, the team will continue a process that includes preparing a country self-portrait giving voice to their consultations. This "self-portrait" profile or country note will be widely shared, discussed and modified, eventually serving as the document from which 4 or 5 entry points (important issues) are derived. These issues, usually reflecting salient national concerns, will be the focus of intensive participatory action research during the next two to three years. The process allows for wide participation by citizens, government and the international community.

We will not go into comprehensive detail as to what may be emerging from the initial consultations. It is premature to do so until the entire country is represented in the first round, but suffice it to say, one common grassroots concern, no matter the background of the participants, was the adamant distrust of political parties. The consistent theme was that political parties were "selfish, corrupt, self-serving, and responsible for historical conflict and the genocide." In pre-genocide Rwanda, people reported being constantly pressured, and even threatened, to join a political party. They did not want to return to those days where, as in the case of one district in Ruhengeri, much of the killing involved the MNRD (the ruling party bent on the extermination of members of the MDR, (a moderate Hutu party). They viewed the re-emergence of political parties a threat to peace and security at this particular time.

An unsettling theme is emerging for the IRDP team. This involved the unquestioning obedience to authority, so pervasive in pre-genocide Rwanda, which continues to be deeply ingrained within society. This psychological conditioning to follow orders of the authorities in power poses a major challenge for the societal transformation process. The IRDP team is finding that despite intensive consultations between government authorities and Rwandans at the local level, the concepts of de-centralized governance, personal rights and responsibilities, and local initiative are difficult for most to comprehend. The WSPI program will take at least three years of intensive research and consensus building to capture accurately the psychological dynamics at work within Rwandan society. It is a process that engages the grassroots in redefining their relationships and identifying a common value system that would insulate society from the manipulation of sectarian differences by those who would abuse their power for personal gain. This program is critical if the goal is the transformation of Rwandan culture into a non-sectarian society characterized by respect for political pluralism that cuts across clan lines, and a system of justice that treats all as equals before the law.

The strength of the WSPI/IRDP process is the ability of the research team to establish a relationship of trust at the grassroots level. The IRDP team is viewed as neutral observers and recorders of the views of people at the grassroots. The fact that the team is comprised of Rwandans of diverse backgrounds certainly contributes to this atmosphere of trust. As a result, the grassroots participants feel they can be completely candid in articulating their concerns, fears and the local reality that shape their attitudes. The dialogue and information emerging from these local discussions is a reflection of the high comfort level of the participants. By understanding this psychological dynamic at work, a portrait can be painted of the attitudes shaping Rwandan society at this critical juncture. This can be an indispensable analytical tool that can inform both the government and donors as to what should be the appropriate focus of program interventions that would begin changing the complex psychological dynamics at work in Rwandan society.

We strongly recommend that USAID contribute $250,000 per year over three years to this project.

Rwanda Conflict Assessment

We had lengthy discussions with the Rwanda Mission reviewing the draft of the recently completed Conflict Vulnerability Assessment (CVA). In light of the feedback we had received from the WSPI/IRDP team, we were concerned over several shortcomings in both the methodology and conclusions in the assessment. Conflict Vulnerability Assessments, usually conducted by outsiders, are of limited valued as there is little or no capacity to capture or understand local reality let alone interact in a way that can establish a level of comfort and trust required for honest discussion to occur among both government and grassroots participants. Outsiders, even so-called experts, have a tendency to relate to, and rely upon, elites, both governmental and non-governmental to shape judgements and conclusions. These elites have their own agendas, their own version of history, and have constructed their own mythology that is oftentimes divorced from the simple and straightforward worldview one finds at the grassroots level.

In all fairness to the team that undertook the Rwanda assessment, they were confronted with a series of limitations. First, the three-week time frame was too short to do a comprehensive assessment. Second, they were limited in their geographic coverage. And third, they were instructed not to incorporate the regional issues, i.e., the war in the Congo, into their assessment framework. We did agree with many of their observations, but found the context in which these observations were articulated not reflective of the local reality. It is the local reality and psychological dynamics at the grassroots level that will influence the potential drivers of conflict and not the perceptions of urban-based elites.

In addition, the CVA is designed to point out causes, flashpoints or triggers for potential deadly conflict. CVAs do not call for an analysis of the "peace factors," as FEWER/International Alert refers to them, which can be built upon to help prevent or mitigate deadly conflict. For CVAs to be useful in strategic design and program development, it might be useful to expand their scope.

The CVA discussed what the authors perceived as the problem of "Rwandan exceptionalism." This phrase is used to explain that the GOR, because of the genocide, is getting a pass from the international community on "normal country" criteria laid out for progress on democratization. We agree that there is a Rwandan exceptionalism. If one compares Rwanda to the Balkans and the military intervention by the West to end the deadly ethnic cleansing there, or in Sierra Leone where British military intervention ended the horrible human rights abuses of the RUF, then Rwanda does stand out as an exception, in a different way. The exception is the inability or unwillingness on the part of the international community to prevent the genocide, to stop it, or respond to the continuation of the genocide launched from internationally funded refugee camps in then-Zaire.

This inaction, and/or lack of political will, inexorably led to the consequences we are seeing being played out today in the Congo.

Democracy and a Desire for National Elections

Despite the fact that the GOR has conducted three elections (at the cell, sector, and commune levels), we are concerned that national elections scheduled for next year, though necessary, will be undertaken in a country bordering on 'reform overload' burdened by serious human resource constraints.

Democracy is as much about the rule of law, a clear acceptance of individual rights and responsibilities, and obligations people have to each other and the broader community, as it about elections and political parties. Rwandan society is struggling with new concepts the government has introduced, such as local decision-making, local governance, personal responsibility and the development of a national identity among the populace that is not rooted in sectarianism. Rwanda does not have a culture of democracy and it will take some time and intensive education for democratic concepts and principles to be

internalized within the population. Political competition as a stabilizing force within Rwanda cannot be achieved in the absence of such a cultural transformation and internalization.

In April 1995, Dick McCall and Jack Hjelt visited the UNHCR Goma camps. During the visit, at the request of one of the UNHCR camp representatives, they obtained an audience with ex-Far officers headquartered in the Lac Vert military camp, about a stone's throw from the refugee camps. During that visit and discussion, an ex-Far General observed: "We want democracy like you have in the United States. The problems in Rwanda are over who controls power, and elections solve that problem."

McCall responded by pointing out that democracy in the United States was a system of checks and balances to ensure that no one person or group could control and abuse power from the center. He stated further that elections in the U.S. are held to select who would govern and not who would rule.

McCall asked the General whether he was a Rwandan first or a Hutu first. The General replied, "They are one and the same." He then asked the General, "Where did that leave the Tutsis? Is Tutsi and Rwandan one and the same?" There was no answer. The concepts of democracy and a common national identity for all people, regardless of origin, were completely alien to his worldview.

So, one has to start somewhere in Rwanda and the government should be commended for undertaking the de-centralization of governance. Strong local governance in Rwanda is the foundation upon which a viable democracy can be built. A major focus of the international community should be a long term commitment to strengthening governance and management capacity from the cell to the commune level. An essential element of the governance transformation is instilling the ethic of decision-making and priority setting at the local level. At present, there still is the tendency of local officials and councils to rely upon the central government for decisions and initiatives. As one GOR official observed, "the absence of community spirit and personal responsibility is disconcerting and poses a major challenge for the future governance of this country."

USAID/Rwanda has supported management training for local government officials since 1996. However, transformation of a political consciousness is a long process. Much work remains and DG resources are limited. A major contribution to strengthening local governance and behavioral change would be training focused on participatory decision making for local government officials, municipal councils and the community development councils. Additional DG resources should be made available for this kind of training, as it is fundamental to developing a culture of democracy. Participatory decision-making processes are essential for not only building ownership, but also for promoting a sense of responsibility on the part of the stakeholders. Such management training programs provide experiences intended to lead to behavioral change in practice. The training could be reinforced by fully integrating local councils into the implementation of the large-scale rural public works program discussed later in this report.

On the positive side, eight elected mayors have been fired for not being responsive to local needs of their constituents and for exhibiting a traditional autocratic way of doing business. While this development may seem trivial, it is significant by Rwandan standards and may be indicative of the positive change beginning to occur within the society.

There is a fundamental issue upon which the Rwandans and their partners in the international community need to reflect. Leave aside, for the moment, the issue of the composition of the current government and consider the following question. Upon what is democratic pluralism in Rwanda to be constructed? This question needs some thoughtful introspection in order for a workable formulation to be devised. In the genocide, the nation lost a generation of moderate Hutu leadership who had a broader vision of the future of Rwanda. The extremists who perpetrated the genocide knew exactly what they were doing in killing potential interlocutors who might collaborate with a minority to establish a non-sectarian democracy. Ethnically based political pluralism has rarely given rise to real democracy.

Despite the fact that much more needs to be accomplished in inculcating this culture of democracy, the government is determined to hold national elections next year. Although it might be much more prudent to allow additional time for the maturing of the new institutions that are in the process of being created before national elections are held and the new constitution ratified, Rwandans are also faced with the need to establish a post Arusha and post genocide legitimacy, while maintaining both stability and a peaceful enfironment.. In any event, it is critical that the vacant DG team leader position in USAID/Rwanda be filled in a timely manner.

Land Reform

The government of Rwanda is in the process of drafting new land reform legislation, which, if not handled correctly, could be a major source of conflict in the future. The history of land reform globally is rife with more failures than successes. Taiwan is one model for a successful land reform program that broke up feudal structures and insured that the beneficiaries had access to extension services, adequate inputs (including credit), and critical infrastructure.

While Rwanda does not have the problem of large land holdings controlled by an agricultural oligarchy, they do have the problem of too many people and too little land. The government wants to press ahead with a major land reform program because, as GOR officials emphasized, “in 20 years our population will double, and we are running out of time to solve this problem.”

In discussions with officials at the Institute for Sustainable Development, a non-governmental organization, they emphasized that land was the most critical area if development is to be sustainable and conflict prevented. It was pointed out that at the grassroots level, historically most of the disputes have centered on land. Since almost

everyone's livelihood is affected by land, how it is governed and who is affected by a new system will determine the success or failure of such reform.

Officials at the Institute acknowledged that the government is under pressure to deliver. However, they are concerned about the future for small producers, particularly since parcels of land below one hectare may not be deemed viable. This would leave small holders in a potential position of having their plots consolidated into larger parcels. This could result in further marginalization of the poor landholders into the poorest segment of the society – "landless rural laborers."

Our team shared this concern. The land issue should focus on production that carries with it added value for the small producer. It is already happening to a small degree. One example is an entrepreneur who has several thousand small holders producing gooseberries and passion fruit for the European market, for which there is strong demand. The same phenomenon is occurring with pyrethrum production.

We recommend that USAID/Rwanda expand its work with the GOR in assessing the full range of agricultural products for which there would be a comparative advantage in export markets. Particular attention should be paid to opportunities that would advantage small producers.

We also recommend that USAID/Rwanda urge the GOR to move slowly on land reform and suggest that pilot projects be undertaken before a final decision is made on a comprehensive program. There is no question that current land policy in Rwanda is unsustainable and is a potential source of future conflict. However, if not done right, land reform could also provoke unintended, but nevertheless tragic, consequences as well.

Rural Public Works Program

According to a recently completed study by John Mellor for the USAID Mission, "Rwanda has a massive supply of underemployed people in poverty whose incomes can be efficiently increased through rural public works, and large potential for highly productive works to be developed by labor-intensive projects." It is estimated that 61 percent of Rwandans have incomes below the poverty line.

In the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper prepared for the World Bank, the Government of Rwanda has placed a high priority on employment generation and labor-intensive public works program. The Government is developing a program of "environmentally sustainable labor-intensive public works for development of soil and water management and forestry management. The program will include terracing, wetland and watershed management, soil conservation, lime crushing (for fertilizer) and economic infrastructure such as feeder roads."

In discussions with the Mission agriculture team, there was strong support for USAID's participation in the rural public works program. The team recommended, and we concurred, that P.L. 480 resources (35,000-40,000 metric tons) should be used to

contribute to what will be a multi-donor funded program. However, rather than launching a countrywide program, the initial focus should be on pilot activities aimed at strengthening local decision-making and implementation capacity. The Mission agrees with this approach.

This program is particularly critical in light of the recent agreement between the Governments of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda. The GOR will face a problem of a growing labor force as demobilization of both the RPA and ex-Far and Interahamwe begins. Job creation for demobilized ex-combatants will be critical to the prospects for internal stability and reconciliation. However, such a job creation program cannot be implemented in a manner whereby significant numbers of Rwandans feel disadvantaged in relation to the ex-combatants.

The team recommends that the DCHA Bureau (particularly Food for Peace) work closely with the Mission in determining the level of support USAID should give to this effort.

The team does have a concern over the demands placed on the already thin human capacity at the local level. Therefore, the U.S. contribution to a rural public works program should also focus on working closely with local Community Development Councils (CDCs) to enhance their management and decision-making capacities. The proposed individual rural public works projects should reflect the priorities of the councils, and through them, the communities. These councils have a significant potential to develop into viable and dynamic organizations and should be cultivated with that goal in mind as well.

The team also recommends that in light of the ongoing food security problems within Rwanda and the potential USAID contribution to the rural public works program, that a Food for Peace Officer be assigned to the USAID/Rwanda Mission.

The Private Sector

During our stay, we visited a satellite earth station that was in the process of being operationalized in Kigali. This is a private sector initiative, giving Rwanda both internet and telecommunications connectivity with much of the world.

The mastermind behind the project is a Belgian who also just entered into an agreement to place 400 solar powered VSAT dishes around the country. The VSATS would ensure that every Rwandan would be within 30 minutes of a telecommunications station. The VSATS can be used to bring long distance learning into schools that are being equipped with an increasing number of computers. The goal of the government is to have computers in every primary and secondary school in the country.

A growing number of IT specialists are graduating from the Kigali Institute for Science and Technology and the National University of Rwanda. The Belgian entrepreneur presents a convincing case that, with the earth station and a growing IT skills base,

Rwanda has the potential to serve as a data processing point for a number of Western firms.

Access to the internet and the availability of almost limitless amounts of information will expose Rwandans of all ethnic backgrounds, particularly the young, to a whole new world of ideas and value systems. This is particularly important for a country where previous regimes had limited higher education to a select few and which historically has been a very insular and isolated society.

This private sector investment is an important outcome of the early commitment and support given to Rwanda by the USAID Leland Initiative and the Education for Democracy and Development Initiative (EDDI). Since 1996, USAID has supported Rwanda's commitment in utilizing IT for the benefit of its people. From its somewhat rocky beginning, it is rather remarkable to contemplate that Rwanda would have a telecommunications and internet capability second to none in Africa. But that is the goal of the entrepreneurs involved in this project who view the entire Great Lakes region as a potential beneficiary of this technology. It is also an outcome of the forward-looking IT policy environment that has been promoted by the GOR. The U.S. is well placed to continue to support contacts and linkages with private sector investment and training programs.

Recommendations and Summary

The recommendations on resources are additive to the existing program levels for Rwanda. We believe the Mission portfolio and priorities are well conceived. In recommending additional resources, if approved, additional burdens should not be imposed on current staff. For this reason, we recommend that the D/G officer slot be filled quickly and that a FFP officer be assigned to Kigali. Even in the absence of additional resources, the D/G slot remains critical. We were impressed with the high quality of the Rwanda/Mission staff across the board.

We recommend the following additional resources be provided the Rwanda Mission:

- $500,000 for Gacaca, of which $75,000 would go to support the IRC/URC baseline study project and monitoring program, and the balance to assist with transportation costs for the magistrates, paper, pencils, files, and case load management;

- $250,000 per year for three years to the War Torn Societies Project International; and,

- 35,000-40,000 metric tons of food (FFP) as the initial contribution to the rural public works project (a monetization program should be explored).

In addition an assessment should be undertaken as to how existing small agricultural producer enterprises can be strengthened and the potential for developing similar enterprises. Recommendations should be made as to what additional resources would be required to begin strengthening this sector. For example, the gooseberry/ passion fruit export enterprise could be expanded significantly if cold storage were available.

The GOR should be encouraged to develop guidelines to abolish the local defense units when they are not longer needed in order to avoid the potential for abuse. While there is acknowledgement that the local defense forces played an important role during periods of insecurity, the need for these voluntary police units seems to be diminishing.

The Gacaca process should be closely monitored by the Mission to insure that a lack of resources does not create problems in a process that is critical to justice and reconciliation in Rwanda. The Mission should not hesitate to request additional resources for Gacaca and USAID/Washington should be prepared to be responsive to such requests.

If peace and stability is to be achieved in the Great Lakes, the recent DRC/GOR agreement has to be implemented and the threat to Rwanda from the ex-Far and Interahamwe eliminated. However, peace and stability within Rwanda could be threatened if there aren't sufficient resources to reintegrate those repatriating to the Rwanda from the DRC.

In light of the serious poverty problems in Rwanda, the international community needs to fund a robust income generation/job creation program. The rural public works program is critical to addressing this problem. The needs of demobilized ex-combatants, particularly for jobs, will be critical for internal stability and security. Yet, as we mentioned earlier in this report, the needs of the ex-combatants should not be met at the expanse of the population as a whole.

The war in the Great Lakes, beginning with the genocide in 1994, has resulted in the tragic deaths of more than 3 million people in the region and the further impoverishment of millions more. The international community has spent billions of dollars to respond to the consequences of this series of catastrophes that could have been avoided. Therefore, the old adage "an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure" is particularly relevant to the challenges facing not only the countries of the region, but the international community as well. For the United States and the international community to be penurious now when the opportunity for peace may be at hand will only guarantee that we will cough up millions in the future to deal with the humanitarian consequences of inaction or lack of political commitment on our part.

In the specific case of Rwanda, the current government is not without its faults and certainly is not perfect, by any stretch of the imagination. However, Rwanda does pose a particular challenge for an international community constrained by the inadequacy of traditional analytical frameworks that cannot hope to capture the psychological dynamics at work within a post-genocide society. There is a tendency to pursue traditional notions

of democratization, i.e. political pluralism as manifested by unrestrained political party development and a free press, in particular.

In the past, particularly between 1990 and 1994, government authorities and political parties were the major mechanisms through which the ideology of genocide was institutionalized within the body politic. Radio Mille Collines was both the primary propaganda arm in fomenting hatred and a key orchestrator of the genocide. And as Gerard Prunier noted in his book The Rwandan Crisis: History of a Genocide, when it came to the relationship between the ruler and the ruled:

"When the ruler gives an order, he must be obeyed, not because his order falls into the sphere over which he has authority, but simply because he is the ruler."

Prunier observed further that: "This unquestioning obedience was to play a tragic and absolutely central role in the unfolding of the 1994 genocide."

It is this legacy of the synergistic role these three institutions (government, political parties, and the media) played in the genocide that the current Government is attempting to dismantle. Decentralization is a key element in that it is aimed at dispersing power and authority from the center to the grassroots. To a certain degree this is a controlled transformation until the new concepts of individual rights and responsibilities become acculturated within the Rwandan psyche.

For the first time in Rwanda's history, elections, no matter how imperfect they might appear, have been held at the cell, sector and commune level. It is required that Councils include representation of women and youth. It is estimated that 80 percent of the economic activity in the country is conducted by women, and that 68 percent of the population is 35 or younger – reasons why the government is insistent that out of the five member councils, these two sectors have to be represented.

The international community has declared these series of elections to be free and fair. Detractors claim there was limited choice in that candidates were pre-selected (this might have occurred in some cases but there were winners and losers) and the elections were not partisan affairs (competition between political parties). Nevertheless, Rwandans were allowed to vote for the first time in 9,165 cells, 1,545 sectors and 106 districts. It is an important beginning.

There is concern that the space for an independent media is very constricted by the government. In light of the history of the use of media as an instrument in the genocide, it is understandable that the government is sensitive to the media's handling of issues that have an ethnic connotation. Six journalists have been arrested (and released with two fleeing the country after being incarcerated). In discussions with Liprodor none of what the journalists had written should have caused concern by the government. The government is probably being over-reactive. Yet, by standards in other countries, such as Zimbabwe and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Eritrea (to name but a few) the Government of Rwanda certainly is not nearly as repressive.

The Liprodor official praised the national police for the high level of professionalism noting that they have had good human rights training. "You can see the changes in the communal detention centers maintained by the police," the spokesman said. "Detainees say they are well-treated and we have had not reports or allegations of abuse of prisoners." This is yet another example of the progress being made in the human rights area.

One of the biggest problems facing the Government is promising too much in the way of reforms, and then not being able to deliver for lack of resources. This is particularly true at the grassroots level where local governments and the Community Development Councils have very few, if any resources. Once again, the donor community could play a more constructive role in providing additional resources that could be channeled to the local level. This would strengthen both local government and the role of the Community Development Councils in decision-making and establishing local priorities.

Too often the international community pushes multi-party elections as an exit strategy from post conflict countries. In the case of Rwanda, there is an opportunity to support a societal transformation that is necessary for the development and sustainability of a culture of democracy over the long term. It will take time and it will take more resources than have been forthcoming to date. Yet, it also means breaking out of the traditional analytical and programmatic straitjackets that the donor community imposes upon itself. In other words, we need to take seriously the work of the War Torn Societies Project International. The work of WSPI and its Rwandan partner institution will lay out a roadmap (through the self-portrait) for both the government and international community to follow that would allow us all to be much more intelligent participants in this transformation process.

In conclusion, the team was reluctant to recommend a larger infusion of resources through USAID/Rwanda. We certainly would support higher levels of assistance. However, we appreciate the fact that additional resources would require a commitment to provide the Mission with larger staff. Therefore, we concentrated on those recommendations that we felt could have not only impact on the important processes underway in Rwanda, but also would be in the Mission's manageable interests. We do think serious consideration should be given to modest increases in U.S. assistance, particularly to the agricultural sector and some form of budget support that for local government and CDC activities. It is critical that creative ways be found to generate sustainable revenues to enable the government to begin paying local government officials.