

Université Nationale du Rwanda  
Centre de Gestion des Conflits

Ministry of Justice  
Kigali, Rwanda

Johns Hopkins University  
Center for Communication Programs



# PERCEPTIONS

about the gacaca law in Rwanda: evidence from a multi-method study

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*Kigali, April 2001*

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# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This document reports the findings of a multi-method study that was conducted to provide formative and baseline information for the upcoming Gacaca promotional campaign in Rwanda. Understanding the perceptions of the intended population prior to designing and implementing a campaign helps to provide a sound scientific basis for the intervention and to ensure that project activities adequately address the needs of the various audience groups. The study was implemented for the Rwanda Ministry of Justice by the Center for Conflict Management (CCM) of the National University of Rwanda. The Johns Hopkins University/Population Communication Services (JHU/PCS) provided technical assistance for the study.

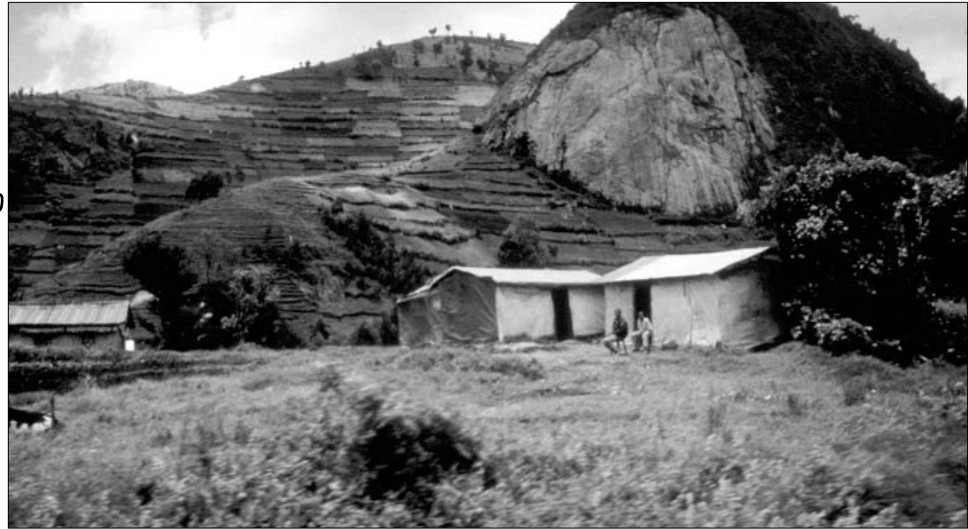
Many people contributed to the implementation of this study. Stella Babalola, Senior Research and Evaluation Officer at the JHU Center for Communication Programs (CCP), played a vital role in designing the research strategy, orienting field staff to data collection, processing and analyzing information, and preparing this document. Simon Gasibirege, the lead CCM person, coordinated the different phases of the research including data collection and analysis and preparing study reports. Joseph Muyango, Dora Urujeni, François Ntaganira and Jacqueline Rwagatare helped to supervise data collection and provided assistance in data processing and analysis.

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# 1 CONTEXT



## Background

Seven years ago, Rwanda witnessed a major genocide that left an estimated 800,000 Rwandans dead and many others displaced or wounded. Today, the country is painstakingly working toward reconciliation and designing structures to promote a vibrant, peaceful and sustainable post-genocide society. In September 1996, the government of Rwanda promulgated the Organic Law, which aimed to facilitate the prosecution of crimes related to the genocide that took place between October 1990 and December 1994. In spite of concrete efforts to implement the law and ensure the effective trial of suspects, it soon became apparent that the law was not likely to lead to a timely resolution of the problems associated with the trial of genocide suspects. Experts predicted that at the pace at which the trials were being expedited, it would take at least one hundred years to try all the suspects. It is not surprising that problems of injustice and corruption in general, and difficulties associated with the trials of genocide and massacre suspects in particular, persist in the Rwandan society.

It is against this background that the Rwandan government wanted to explore other means of addressing the problems associated with the trials of genocide suspects. An in-depth review of the situation revealed that a judicial system that ensures active participation of the community in the process of investigation of accusations and sentencing of culprits could be a viable option to the classical judicial system. Thus, the gacaca judicial system evolved, and the Gacaca law became one of the ways to help Rwandans gain justice. Gacaca jurisdictions will be set up at the different administrative levels, starting from the *cellule* to the *secteur*, the *commune* and the *préfecture*. The Gacaca law regulates the functioning of the gacaca jurisdictions. It defines how people register, nominate and vote for gacaca tribunal judges and explains the role and responsibility of the gacaca tribunal at each administrative level. The important aspect of the Gacaca law is that it removes most of the genocide trials from the classical judicial system. The gacaca jurisdictions will try all cases that fall under categories 2 through 4 as defined by the 1996 Organic law. Category 2 cases involve those who were perpetrators or accomplices of homicide. Cases falling under category 3 are those



involving people who committed crimes of aggravated assault without intention to kill, while Category 4 cases involve those who looted or destroyed other people's property. Category 1 cases, which involve persons accused of planning, organizing or supervising the genocide, and committing sexual torture, will continue to be tried in the regular judicial system. The Gacaca law also includes a Confession and Guilty Plea clause that makes provisions for reduced sentences for those who confess and plead guilty.

The Johns Hopkins University Population Communication Services (JHU/PCS) is providing technical assistance to the Ministry of Justice in developing and implementing a USAID-funded Democracy and Governance (D&G) project. The primary objective of the project is to increase public awareness about and understanding of the various facets of the Gacaca law. The project also seeks to promote the rule of law, encourage widespread support for the gacaca jurisdictions, and mobilize individuals and groups to participate in the gacaca jurisdictions.

In June 2000, as part of preparatory activities for the gacaca campaign, JHU/PCS worked with the Center for Conflict Management (CCM) of the National University of Rwanda to conduct qualitative research exploring community perspectives on the Gacaca law and to help set the stage for a household survey to be conducted between September and October 2000. Both the qualitative and the quantitative studies were designed to provide a scientific basis for the strategy and messages that will be employed to promote the Gacaca law and jurisdictions among the various segments of the Rwandan population. The findings reported in this document were derived from both sources.

## **Study Objectives**

The multi-method study aimed to provide pertinent information that can be used to design appropriate behavior change communication interventions in support of the gacaca jurisdictions and to promote reconciliation in the Rwandan society. In addition to providing appropriate formative data, the qualitative research was designed to identify pertinent variables to be included in the survey tool. The sample survey was designed to provide baseline data against which the impact of project interventions can be measured.

Specifically, both data sources sought to:

- Identify the fears and concerns of the population regarding sustainable peace in Rwanda;
- Determine knowledge and attitudes of the population about the gacaca jurisdictions;
- Elucidate the expectations and concerns of the population regarding the Gacaca law;
- Clarify factors that could influence participation of the population in the gacaca process;
- Examine knowledge and attitudes about the Confession and Guilty Plea provision of the Organic Law;
- Elucidate knowledge and attitudes vis-à-vis the community work scheme;
- Document the common and credible sources of information on social issues; and
- Determine sources of influence on important personal decisions among the population.



## Methodology

The qualitative research used focus group discussions (FGDs) and in-depth interviews to gather data from the adult population in five provinces: Kigali Ville, Butare, Gitarama, Kibuye, and Kibungo. Both prison and non-prison populations were included in the qualitative research. In all, a total of 20 FGDs and 10 in-depth interviews were conducted among the non-prison population. In addition, five FGDs were conducted in the prisons. The sample survey included adults aged 18 to 59 years in all but one prefecture of the country. For the purpose of the sample survey, the country was divided into four zones to reflect perceived differences in genocide experiences: North/North-West (Byumba, Ruhengeri and Gisenyi), Center/Center-East (Kibungo, Kigali Rural and Kigali Ville), Center-West (Kibuye and Gitarama), and South (Butare, Cyangugu and Gikongoro). The sampling design involved a multi-stage process with communes selected at the first stage and cellules (representing clusters) at the second stage. In the selected cellules, fieldworkers listed all the households and selected a previously determined number proportional to the total number of households in the cluster. In the selected households, all male and female adults aged 18 to 59 were interviewed. A total of 789 men and 887 women were successfully interviewed during the survey.

## Socio-Demographic Characteristics of the Survey Respondents

Table 1 provides information on the socio-demographic characteristics of the population. The sample contains more women (53%) than men (47%), which is not surprising considering the greater effects of genocide and the civil war on the male population.

**Table 1: Socio-demographic characteristics of respondents**

Variable/category	Percent in category	Variable/category	Percent in category
<b>GENDER</b>		<b>OCCUPATION</b>	
Male	47.1	Farmer	75.2
Female	52.9	Civil Servant	3.5
<b>AGE GROUP</b>		Private Sector	3.1
< 25	29.0	Artisan	5.4
25 – 34	29.6	Trader	2.9
35 – 44	25.6	Other	4.8
45 +	15.8	Unemployed	5.1
<b>EDUCATION</b>		<b>RESIDENCE</b>	
None	29.6	Urban	13.9
Primary	54.9	Rural	86.1
Secondary	13.8	<b>PREFECTURE</b>	
Post-secondary	1.6	Kibuye	13.0
<b>LANGUAGES SPOKEN</b>		Gitarama	12.3
Kinyarwanda	99.8	Butare	13.3
French	16.5	Gikongoro	4.4
Swahili	13.1	Cyangugu	9.2
English	6.9	Byumba	10.8
<b>LANGUAGES READ WITHOUT DIFFICULTY</b>		Ruhenger	7.3
Kinyarwanda	54.6	Gisenyi	3.9
French	12.9	Kibungo	9.5
English	4.2	Kigali Rural	5.7
<b>RELIGION</b>		Kigali Ville	10.5
Catholic	49.6	<b>REGION</b>	
Protestant	43.9	North/North-West	22.1
Moslem	4.6	Center/Center-East	25.6
Traditional	0.1	Center-West	25.3
None	1.7	South	26.9
<b>NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS 1676</b>			

Among men, the average age is 33 years while it is 32 years among women. Almost 30% of the respondents have no formal education while about 15% have post-primary education. Women (32%) are more likely than men (27%) to have never attended school. Practically everyone speaks Kinyarwanda, while almost 17% speak French, 7% speak English, and 13% of the respondents reported speaking Swahili. In terms of literacy in specific languages, Kinyarwanda is the most common with more than half of the respondents reporting that they could read this language without difficulty. An additional 16% could read Kinyarwanda with some difficulty. About 13% of the respondents reported proficiency in French and 4% could read English without difficulty.

The majority of the respondents were Christians: almost 50% are Catholics and 44% are Protestants. Moslems made up not quite 5% of the sample while those with no religion were less than 2%. The proportion of Moslems varied conspicuously by prefecture. Whereas more than one-fifth (22%) of the respondents from Kigali Ville were Moslems, the other prefectures (especially, Kibuye, Gikongoro, Kigali Rural, Cyangugu, Ruhengeri, Gisenyi and Gitarama) had few or no Moslem respondents. About three-fourths of the respondents were farmers, 5% were artisans, and 7% were employees of the private or public sectors.

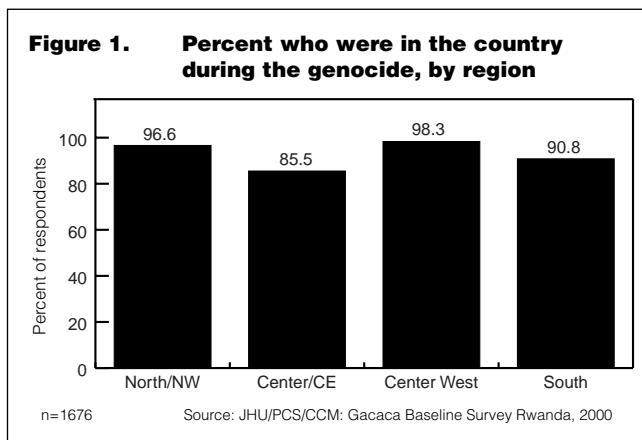
# 2

# GENOCIDE EXPERIENCE & ATTITUDES



## Personal Genocide-Related Experience

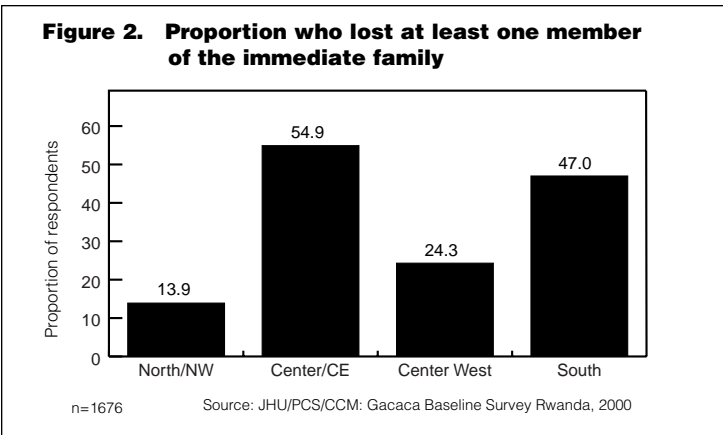
**F**or the purpose of confidentiality and subjects' protection, extremely sensitive, personal issues dealing with the genocide experience were not addressed during the qualitative research. For the same reasons, the survey questionnaire did not contain explicit questions on the ethnic identity of the respondents. However, a few questions were included to document, to a certain extent, the personal experience of the respondents during the genocide. Those questions related to the presence or absence of the respondent in Rwanda during the genocide, personal losses due to the genocide and the civil war, and whether or not the respondents have relations in prison. These questions were designed to provide some insight into the extent of human suffering connected with the genocide. More importantly, the questions made it possible to classify the respondents into socio-cultural groups reflecting specific genocide experiences. By combining migration status and loss of family members, respondents were divided into four groups: (1) those who were present during the genocide and lost a family member, (2) those who were present but did not lose a family member, (3) those who returned to the country after the genocide but lost a family member, and (4) those who returned after the genocide and did not lose a family member. This experiential identity variable could influence concerns and expectations within the gacaca jurisdictions.



The majority (93%) of the respondents was present in the country during the genocide and therefore had direct experience with the genocide (Figure 1). Being in the country during the genocide varies significantly by region. Specifically, the Center/Center-East region contains more people who

immigrated into the country after the genocide. Kigali Ville (78%) and Kibungo (86%) are the prefectures with the lowest proportion of respondents who were in the country during the genocide.

A considerable proportion of the respondents (36%) reported the loss of at least one member of their immediate family as a result of the genocide (Figure 2). The proportion experiencing genocide-related loss of family members is much higher in the Center/Center-East and the southern regions. Kigali Ville (79%) is the prefecture with the highest incidence of genocide-related loss of family members. Reported loss of family members is also particularly high in Butare prefecture (63%). On the other hand, Ruhengeri (4%) and Gikongoro (16%) have the lowest proportion of people who lost a family member to genocide. It is pertinent to mention that the genocide and the ensuing civil war resulted in a considerable shift in the residence pattern of the population. The observed regional pattern of loss of family members is the result of two factors: the actual level of genocide activities



in the region and the emigration from the region of people whose lives were threatened during the genocide. Hence, whereas genocide activities were more widespread in the Center-West than in the

Center/Center-East, the former contains proportionally fewer people reporting loss of family members because of massive emigration of genocide survivors.

Examining the specific case of loss of spouse to genocide, the incidence is significantly higher for women (5%) than for men (1%). The difference in loss of married men compared with that of married women during the genocide has important implications for family income. It is also pertinent to note that there are regional differences in reported loss of spouse as a result of the genocide, varying from almost 2% in the North/North-West to almost 8% in the South.

Overall, more than one-quarter (27%) of the respondents were in Rwanda and have lost a family member to genocide. Most of the people in this category are genocide survivors (*réscapés*). Some 52% witnessed the genocide but did not lose a family member. About 12% were outside the country during the genocide and did not lose a family member. Another 9%, who were also outside the country, did lose a family member.

About 8% of the respondents reported that they received physical injuries during the genocide. Kigali Ville (10%) and Butare (12%) have the highest proportion of people with genocide-related physical injuries. Furthermore, nearly two-fifths (38%) of the respondents reported material loss during the genocide, with a range of 31% in the Center-West to 47% in the Center/Center-East region.

Some of the respondents (29%) reported that they have close relations who are in prison for reasons connected with the genocide. Fewer respondents in the North/North-West (15%) than in the other regions reported having a close relation in prison. In the South the proportion is 35% and in the Center-West, 36%.

Overall, three-quarters of the respondents have experienced one form of loss or separation as a result of genocide. Many (42%) have experienced multiple types of losses. These findings point to the high level of trauma in the Rwandan society.

## Perceptions About Major Social Problems in the Rwandan Society

The FGDs explored the perceptions of the population concerning the major social problems in the Rwandan society. The survey questionnaire also contained one question that required respondents to list the problems they perceive as major in the current Rwandan society. Findings from the FGDs clearly show that poverty and other problems of daily living were the ones most felt by the population. As one focus group discussant put it:

*“Life is very difficult, the soil is no longer fertile and destructive birds are on the increase. You have to leave your farming activities to take food to those who are in prison... plus you have to feed 3 or 4 unemployed people.”* Rural man, Kibuye

More than four-fifths of the respondents confirmed that poverty was widely perceived by the population as a major problem (Table 2). Other problems that were repeatedly mentioned in the survey responses and the FGDs were insecurity and distrust among members

**Table 2. Perceived major social problems in Rwanda**

PERCEIVED PROBLEM	% MENTIONING
Poverty / Economic Hardships	81.9
Insecurity	20.6
Lack of trust / insincerity	14.8
Trial of genocide suspects	12.6
Health problems / poor health services	10.2
Emotional problems due to genocide	4.4
Poor educational system	4.0
<b>NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS 1676</b>	

of the same community. Interestingly, the focus group discussants generally agreed that social relationships between the Hutus and the Tutsis have improved considerably and the problem of distrust abated since the immediate post-genocide period.

*“We now find ourselves together during festivities and other occasions. The harshness of our interactions has lessened and people now speak to one another, help care for the sick, and generally feel at ease with one another.”* Rural man, Kibuye

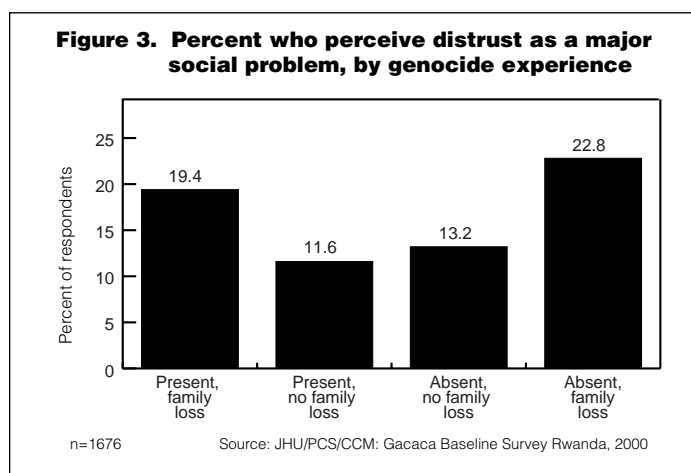
*“At this time we are able to share in the joys and pains of one another, help carry the sick one for the other, discuss issues together, sympathize with those who are bereaved...”* Urban man, Nyaruhengeri

Nonetheless, relational problems among socio-ethnic groups, manifested through distrust, do persist.

*“There are two segments within the [Rwandan] society: those who killed and those whose relations were killed. It is impossible to tell a survivor to forget.”* Male opinion leader

*“There is distrust vis-à-vis those who returned from exile. Those who wronged us did not want to see us come out of prison.”* Prisoner, Butare

In the survey, almost 15% of the respondents identified distrust as a major problem in the Rwandan society. Of note is the finding that perception of distrust as a major social problem is closely linked to personal experience during the genocide. As shown in Figure 3, those who are most likely to perceive distrust as a major social problem are those who were not present in the country during the genocide but have lost a family member. They are closely followed by those who witnessed the genocide and have lost a family member.



Poor health, problems of an inefficient health system in the country and other social problems were also frequently mentioned.

*“... many people around us are sick, people are finding it difficult to obtain the medication they need to treat themselves.”* Prisoner, Butare

*“Because of poverty, our children can no longer go beyond the primary education level.”* Rural man, Kibuye

Problems directly connected with the trial of genocide suspects were mentioned by about 13% of the respondents in the survey while about 4% referred to emotional problems resulting from the genocide experience. Perceiving the trial of genocide suspects as a major social problem is more prevalent among some socio-demographic groups than among others. For example, the survey data showed that whereas only 5% of the respondents from the North and North-West mentioned this problem, about 16% of those from the Center-West and slightly more than 16% of those from the South mentioned it. Similarly, men (16%) are more likely than women (10%) to perceive the trial of suspects as a major problem. Quite understandably, those who have a relation in prison on genocide-related charges are considerably more likely than the others to perceive the trial of judges as a major social problem: about 20% compared to 9%.

## Current Feelings About Events Connected with the Genocide

Seven years after the genocide, there are still strong emotions among the various segments of the Rwandan population about the events that took place. During the FGDs, the array of feelings expressed include fear, melancholy, fear of vengeance, hatred, and suspicion.

*“... people are still afraid. They are prone to intense fear. You see it around especially during the reburial of genocide victims.”* Opinion leader, male

*“General mistrust: one says ‘this person caused my relation to be put in prison.’ another says: ‘this person exterminated my family.’”* Opinion leader, female

In the survey, only a little more than one-tenth of the respondents reported no specific feelings related to the genocide. Many of the respondents expressed the fear that genocide might happen again. Melancholy and a sense of insecurity are other emotional feelings often expressed by the respondents. A few people expressed deep emotional trauma and anger. Fear of revenge is expressed by 4% of the population.

Emotions about the genocide differ conspicuously by socio-demographic characteristics and by personal genocide experience. The respondents who witnessed the genocide and lost a family member were the least likely to state that they have no feelings about the events connected with genocide (Table 3). Whereas almost 45% of illiterates and 47% of those with primary education experience fear, it is reported by only 27% of those with post-primary education. In general, those who were present in the country during the genocide are

**Table 3: Emotions reportedly currently felt by respondents concerning the genocide, by personal genocide experience**

EMOTIONS	PERCENT REPORTING				
	PL	PNL	ANL	AL	Ensemble
Fear of repeated occurrence	43.3	47.9	38.6	26.4	43.5
Melancholy	31.2	20.7	28.9	43.9	26.7
Insecurity	13.0	13.1	11.2	14.2	12.9
Trauma/insomnia	10.3	4.2	8.6	6.7	6.6
Anger	8.3	3.3	1.5	6.7	4.7
Fear of revenge	3.6	4.7	4.1	4.7	4.2
Distrust	3.1	2.7	1.5	5.4	2.9
No specific feelings	7.1	12.9	14.7	14.1	11.7
<b>NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS</b>	448	859	197	149	1653

Notes: **PL** Present during genocide, lost family members  
**PNL** Present during genocide, did not lose family members  
**ANL** Absent during genocide, did not lose family members  
**AL** Absent during genocide, lost family members

more likely than the others to experience fear. While 46% of those who had witnessed genocide expressed fear of a reoccurrence only 33% of those who were outside the country during the genocide expressed this feeling. Feelings of melancholy are more prevalent



among the respondents who did not witness the genocide but had lost a family member to genocide: about 44%. By way of comparison, 31% of those who witnessed the genocide and experienced the loss of a family member expressed melancholy.

*“Those from whom I sought advice were among the first to be killed. [Our] hearts are deeply wounded.”* Urban man (genocide survivor), Butare

About 21% of those who witnessed the genocide without loss of family members currently experience melancholy over genocide events. Finally, emotional trauma is more common among those who witnessed the genocide and also lost a family member.

# 3

## GACACA PERCEPTIONS & INTENTIONS



### Knowledge about Gacaca Jurisdictions

More than four-fifths of the respondents (82%) have heard about the gacaca jurisdictions. Awareness is closely related to education and gender. Men (90%) are considerably more likely than women (75%) to have heard about gacaca jurisdictions. Similarly, awareness increases steadily with education from 73% among illiterates to almost 90% among those with secondary education and 92% among the post-secondary educated.

While awareness is high, knowledge about the functioning of the jurisdictions and the specific roles of the community is rather limited.

*“Those who imagined the gacaca had a very good idea, but we are yet to know how it will operate.”* Urban woman, Butare

*We have not received much explanation about the gacaca but we have heard them say that it will be a means to allow people to say the whole truth.”* Rural man, Kibuye

The survey showed that 76% of those who are aware of gacaca jurisdictions understand that the tribunals will try only the crimes connected with genocide, while only 9% know that gacaca tribunals will not try cases involving genocide-related rape, and almost 15% were not sure what the gacaca tribunals can try. There is much misinformation about the gacaca jurisdictions. For example, more than three-fourths of respondents professing awareness of the gacaca

jurisdictions erroneously believed that the tribunals will try genocide-related rape cases or those who orchestrated the genocide (Table 4). The survey also indicates there is much misinformation about the government’s role in selecting gacaca judges.

**Table 4: Knowledge about gacaca jurisdictions**

Specific statements about gacaca	% believing
<b>CORRECT</b>	
Gacaca tribunals will try cases involving materials loss during the genocide	77.5
Every Rwandan has the responsibility of testifying before gacaca tribunals	89.4
Only literate people can become gacaca judges	37.7
<b>INCORRECT</b>	
Gacaca tribunals will try cases involving genocide-related rape	76.2
Gacaca tribunals will try those who masterminded the genocide	76.4
The government will select gacaca judges	42.1
<b>Total number of respondents</b>	<b>1368</b>

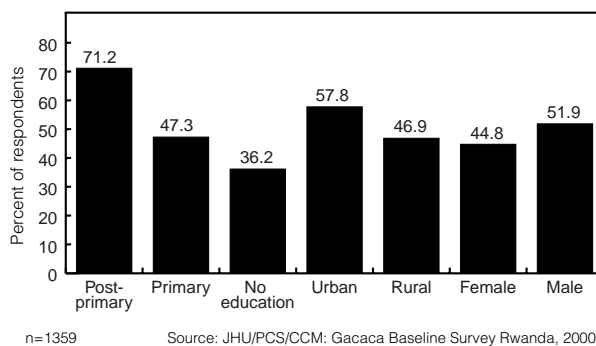
Knowledge about the benefits of the Confession and Guilty Plea provision of the Gacaca law is also limited. About 20% admitted that they did not know the benefits while less than half were cognizant of the fact that it could lead to a reduced sentence. Many gave erroneous responses such as acquittal (23%) or that it does not present any advantage (10%). Understanding the benefits of the Confession and Guilty Plea for the accused is positively associated with the male gender, urban residence, and post-primary education (Figure 4).

Few of the respondents were conversant with the specific responsibilities of the community in the gacaca process. Less than 4% knew that the community would elect the judges while almost 64% knew about the role of the community in providing evidence before the tribunals. Few (6%) mentioned mobilizing the culprits to confess their involvement in the genocide.

By combining nine of the survey questions addressing knowledge about the functioning of the gacaca jurisdic-

tions, a knowledge indicator was computed that varied between 0 and 9. The nine items upon which the indicator is based have an alpha score for internal reliability of 0.77 indi-

**Figure 4. Percent who understand the benefits of the Confession and Guilty Plea, by selected socio-demographic characteristics**



**Table 5: Proportion manifesting high knowledge about gacaca jurisdictions, by selected socio-demographic characteristics and genocide experience**

Socio-demographic characteristic	% with high knowledge level
<b>EDUCATION</b>	
None	7.7
Primary	11.3
Secondary	15.1
Post-secondary	25.9
<b>GENDER</b>	
Male	14.0
Female	8.4
<b>PLACE OF RESIDENCE</b>	
Urban	19.7
Rural	9.6
<b>GENOCIDE EXPERIENCE</b>	
Present, lost a family member	15.2
Present, did not lose family member	8.9
Absent, did not lose family member	7.1
Absent, lost a family member	15.4

ating that the items are acceptably related. Based on the indicator, about 19% of the respondents have no knowledge of gacaca jurisdictions while a little over one-fifth (22%) have low knowledge. Less than half (48%) manifested a medium level of knowledge about the gacaca jurisdictions while only one-tenth showed a high knowledge level. Knowledge about the gacaca jurisdictions varied by education, gender, place of residence, and personal experience during the genocide, with high knowledge (Table 5) being

associated with the male gender, post-primary education, urban residence, and loss of a family member during the genocide.

## Perceptions About Gacaca Jurisdictions

Findings from the FGDs and in-depth interviews showed that in spite of low knowledge and widespread misinformation, Rwandans attach a lot of importance to the Gacaca law and are overwhelmingly in favor of the jurisdictions. Moreover, the jurisdictions seem to kindle a lot of hope in Rwandans.

*“Gacaca will bring Rwandans closer together. It will bring about unity and reconciliation.”* Male opinion leader

*“There are some with whom I discussed, they are in favor of the gacaca, they have relations in prison.”* Urban woman, Butare

*“Everyone expects [gacaca] to bring them salvation: prisoners, their relations, survivors...”* Female opinion leader

It may seem ironic that with little knowledge about the objectives and modes of operation of the gacaca jurisdictions, favorable attitudes were prevalent among the various socio-cultural groups in the country, as confirmed by the survey data. The truth of the matter is that most Rwandans want the problems connected with the genocide successfully resolved. They are therefore apt to favor any move that promises such an outcome.

*“What we are asking for is that justice be done...”* Urban man

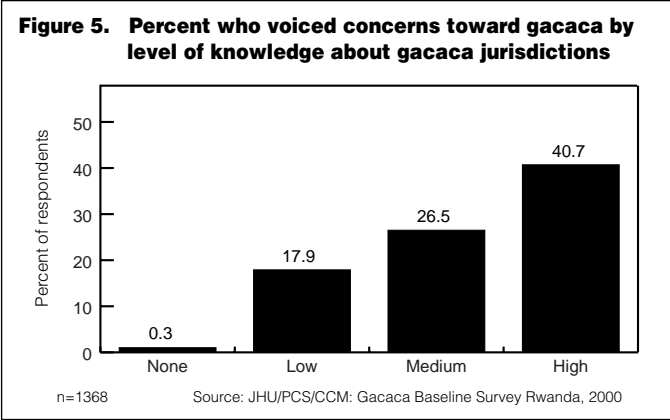
*“[Gacaca] is a practical way to tackle the problems caused by the genocide.”* Male opinion leader

The data revealed that there is a certain level of confidence in the potential efficacy of the gacaca jurisdictions to resolve the problems connected with the trials of the genocide suspects and to promote sustainable peace in Rwanda. Indeed, about 58% of the respondents stated that they were highly confident that the jurisdictions will succeed in resolving the problems of trial of the suspects while another 29% stated that they were fairly confident. Similarly, 53% were highly confident that the jurisdictions would help to promote sustainable peace in the country. Confidence in the success of the gacaca is equally prevalent among various socio-demographic groups and does not seem to depend on personal experience during the genocide. It is noteworthy, however, that those who have high knowledge about the Gacaca law (53%) are less likely than others (58%) to believe in the efficacy of the gacaca jurisdictions.

When asked about the potential advantages of the gacaca jurisdictions over the classical judicial system, less than one-fifth of the survey respondents did not know, while 3% stated that Gacaca had no advantage over the classical judicial system. Many (41%), however, saw the involvement of the community as an advantage, while some (28%) appreciated the faster-pace trials that the gacaca jurisdictions are expected to provide. Others (13%) believed that the jurisdictions would help to minimize the problems of corruption associated with the classical tribunals while about 8% were of the opinion that the gacaca jurisdictions would help to accelerate the reconciliation process.

A large proportion (75%) of the survey respondents stated that they had no specific points of concerns about the gacaca jurisdictions. Those who did voice concerns mentioned

the possibility of witnesses and culprits lying before the tribunals (14%), corrupt judges (8%), outright refusal to testify (6%), fear of vengeance subsequent to testifying (4%), and insufficient witnesses in certain areas (3%). The fact that not many people expressed specific concerns about the gacaca jurisdictions could be due to the low knowledge about the Gacaca law among the population. Those who are more knowledgeable about the jurisdictions are more likely to voice specific concerns (Figure 5). The positive relationship between knowledge and concerns indicate that the concerns are not the product of misinformation and should be taken seriously in the design and implementation of the gacaca campaign. Also noteworthy is the finding that those who had lost a family member (34%) were more likely than the others (14%) to voice specific concerns.



**Intention to Participate in the Gacaca Process**

Another finding of this study is the overwhelming readiness of Rwandans to participate in the gacaca process. In the FGDs, both the prison and non-prison populations expressed the intention to participate in the gacaca process.

*“As soon as the gacaca starts, I am going to accuse my accomplices who are still out there.”* Prisoner, Butare

*“My desire is to see them put in place soon and functioning.”* Rural woman, Kibuye

A majority of the survey respondents (96%) indicated the intention to participate in the election of gacaca judges. The survey data also indicate that more than 87% of community members are willing to provide evidence before the gacaca tribunals, with men (89%) slightly more willing than women (85%). No other socio-demographic variable is associated with significant differences in the intention to provide evidence.

**Perceptions About Restitution and Compensation**

The Government of Rwanda has repeatedly indicated the intention to ensure that survivors of the genocide and families of victims receive appropriate compensation for their losses. However, the modalities for compensation are yet to be finalized and no one

has, to date, received any compensation. A few questions were included in the survey tool to explore community perceptions about the compensation scheme. The data revealed that a majority (86%) of the respondents was in favor of compensating the family of a genocide victim. Attitudes in favor of compensation were more prevalent among men (90%) than among women (82%). Regarding the relations of the victim that should receive compensation, respondents mentioned their children (51%), parents (45%), spouse (37%), brothers (17%) and sisters (16%). Attitudes largely support direct monetary payment as the type of compensation that should be provided. Many of the respondents (65%) believed that the people and their families guilty of genocide should be responsible for paying the compensation. Acceptance to pay compensation is viewed by most (69%) as a sign of the desire for reconciliation on the part of those who perpetrated the genocide. However, for many of the respondents (58%), especially those who lost a family member to genocide (68%), providing compensation for victims is not a sufficient condition for ensuring lasting peace in the country. In the opinion of most respondents (89%), lasting peace can only be ensured when the authors of genocide recognize their faults, ask for forgiveness, and show the desire for reconciliation.

### Sources of Information and Advice

The answers to questions about where people receive their information, how they perceive the sources to which they are exposed and to whom do they go to seek advice on personal issues will be useful in determining appropriate channels for communicating campaign messages.

The radio is the most commonly mentioned source of information in both urban and rural areas (Table 6). In the urban area, other important sources of information include newspapers, magazines, television, friends and relations, and community meetings. In rural areas other notable sources are community meetings, friends and relations, and newspapers and magazines. Television is not a relevant source of information in rural areas where more people depend on local authorities for information than in urban areas. The church is not a

**Table 6:  
Sources of information on social issues, by place of residence**

SOURCES	% REPORTING	
	Urban	Rural
Radio	89.9	81.0
Television	24.9	6.8
Newspaper/Magazine	32.2	17.4
Community meetings	19.6	24.3
Friends/relations	23.1	18.1
School/place of work	2.6	0.9
Local authorities	5.2	9.2
Church	0.4	0.7
No source	3.1	5.5
<b>NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS</b>	229	1426

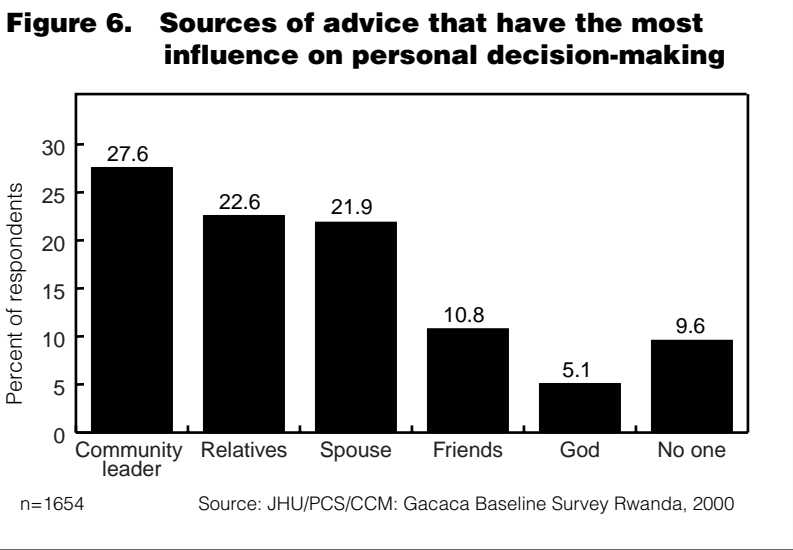
significant source of information in either rural or urban areas. Many of the respondents (68%) mentioned radio as the most credible source of information, followed by community meetings (12%), and friends and relations (6%).

People tend to turn primarily to relations or community leaders for advice, though there are differences between urban and rural areas. As shown in Table 7, the most common sources of advice are relations (other than spouse) in urban areas and community leaders in rural areas. Friends, neighbors and spouse are also common sources of advice. Religious leaders are seldom referred to for advice even if God (and thereby religion) appears to play a

**Table 7:  
Sources of advice concerning personal problems, by place of residence**

SOURCES	% REPORTING	
	Urban	Rural
Relatives (other than spouse)	41.7	32.3
Friends/Neighbors	35.6	31.1
Community Leaders	30.4	45.9
Spouse	24.8	28.2
God	10.3	5.6
Religious leader	2.6	2.3
<b>NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS</b>	229	1426

role in decision-making for about 5% of the respondents (Figure 6). The observed reference points for advice highlight the important role played by personal relationships in decision-making, since about two-thirds of the respondents mentioned interpersonal sources such as friends, neighbors, spouse and relations. The community leader is the most commonly mentioned source of advice that has the most influence on decision-making.





# 4

## SUMMARY & PROGRAMMATIC IMPLICATIONS



The foregoing has examined the findings of a multi-method study designed to explore community perspectives on the Gacaca law and jurisdictions. Overall, the study reveals a low level of knowledge about the Gacaca law and jurisdictions, but favorable attitudes toward the jurisdictions and a high level of willingness to participate in both the election of judges and in providing evidence before the tribunals. Below is a synopsis of the specific findings and their programmatic implications.

### **Kinyarwanda is universally spoken in the country.**

Practically everyone speaks Kinyarwanda. Therefore, audio materials in this language have the potential of adequately reaching the intended audience.

### **Literacy level is low.**

About 45% of the respondents are not literate in any language. Practically all who are literate can read Kinyarwanda. The implication of these findings is that print materials have the potential of reaching fewer people than do audio materials. However, print materials in Kinyarwanda should be used to complement audio materials. This will help to ensure that people receive the messages from a variety of sources thereby maximizing impact. Print materials in French may be relevant in urban areas.

### **There are important regional variations in religious composition.**

Whereas the respondents from most of the other prefectures are predominantly Christians, about one-fifth of the respondents from Kigali Ville are Moslems. This raises the need to

provide information on the Gacaca law and jurisdictions to the Moslems in Kigali Ville, possibly through the involvement of Islamic religious leaders.

### **Personal experience with genocide varies noticeably across prefectures.**

As a result of urban-rural migration and former refugees tending to settle in urban areas, Kigali contains a considerably higher proportion of respondents who had experienced the loss of a family member due to genocide. At the same time, such big towns also contain more people who did not witness the genocide. It is therefore important to take variations in personal experience with genocide into account in the design of messages.

### **The genocide and the attendant massive migration have led to a considerable shift in the residence pattern of the population.**

Today, some of the areas worst affected by the genocide contain relatively few people who witnessed the genocide and lost a family member. The implication of this finding is that in some communities there may be a dearth of people available to accuse culprits and provide incriminating evidence to convict a suspect. This point is particularly important since suspects can only be convicted based on evidence from those who actually witnessed the act. It is therefore important to sensitize, and make adequate provision for, witnesses who may have migrated, to return to their previous place of abode to exercise their civic duties within the gacaca jurisdictions.

### **Poverty is generally perceived as the most important social problem in the Rwandan society today.**

More than three-fourths of the respondents mentioned poverty as the major social problem in the Rwandan society. Moreover, most of the problems of poverty are perceived to be directly linked with the genocide and thereby expected to be resolved through the gacaca process. Concomitantly, with efforts aimed at resolving the issue of the trial of genocide suspects, attention to poverty alleviation would minimize social unrest and help ensure a lasting peaceful environment in the country.

### **Emotions about genocide are still strong.**

Among the various segments of the Rwandan population, there persist strong negative emotions about the events connected with the genocide. Notable among these emotions are fear, melancholy and a sense of insecurity. The fact that people still exhibit strong emotions in response to the events linked with the genocide should be taken into consideration in the campaign. It is not certain what effects the stipulations of the Gacaca law (for example, community participation in the election of gacaca judges, provision of pertinent evidence before the tribunal) will have on the negative emotions that people are currently endeavoring to overcome and have probably only succeeded in hiding superficially. Neither is it clear to what extent these emotions will affect active participation in the gacaca process. What seems obvious, however, is the need to be aware of and focus on these emotions as part of the campaign and try to be prepared for any eventuality that may result from them. In this light, the Rwandan government, along with international and national agencies and individuals experienced in managing the psychosocial effects of widespread violent conflict,

should try to identify possible links between post-genocide emotional states and the fulfillment of civic responsibilities as it relates to the gacaca process. Efforts should also be made to identify and implement appropriate coping strategies.

**Awareness about gacaca jurisdictions is high but actual knowledge is low.**

Most of the respondents have heard about the gacaca jurisdictions. Few, however, have actual knowledge of how the jurisdictions function or the specific role of the community in the process. This underscores the need for continued efforts to increase knowledge about the Gacaca law. The efforts should focus on sensitizing the audience about various facets of the Gacaca law, including its objectives, the modus operandi, the responsibilities of the community, and the advantages of the Confession and Guilty Plea clause. Efforts should also specifically focus on enlightening the population on how to exercise their civic duty with regard to gacaca. For example, the audience needs to know how to register and vote, how to nominate a candidate for the position of gacaca judge, how to campaign for a candidate, and what abilities to look for in a potential gacaca judge. It is also important to sensitize the populace on why it is important to avoid dissimulating information from gacaca tribunals, the penalties attached to refusal to testify and false testimony, and the provisions made to protect witnesses.

**Relatively few respondents voice concerns about gacaca, but the most knowledgeable about the law are the most likely to express concerns.**

Most of the respondents did not articulate any specific concerns about the Gacaca law and jurisdictions. However, expression of concerns is positively associated with knowledge about the Gacaca law. This underscores the need for continuous monitoring of the impact of the gacaca campaign on the community, at least in selected sites. The monitoring activity should aim to identify changes in perceptions of the community in response to the gacaca campaign so that program staff can detect and promptly address pertinent concerns and expectations.

**Expressed concerns focus on the fairness of the trials.**

Some respondents expressed concern about the possibility of witnesses and culprits lying before the tribunals and of judges being corrupt. Efforts should be made, not just to reassure the population concerning these issues, but also to implement appropriate mechanisms to counter such events.

**There is a certain level of confidence in the potential efficacy of gacaca.**

The data indicate that Rwandans have major expectations vis-à-vis the Gacaca law. Many believe that the law and the resulting gacaca jurisdictions will help to resolve the problems associated with the trial of genocide suspects. More importantly, it is widely believed that the law will lead to sustainable peace in the country. Behavior change experts are increasingly recognizing perceived response efficacy as a key variable in determining whether or not people will adopt a prescribed behavior. It is therefore important to convert those who are

yet to be totally convinced about the efficacy of gacaca. It is equally important to ensure that as people become more knowledgeable about the Gacaca law, perceived response efficacy does not wane. This is particularly relevant considering the finding that perceived efficacy appears to decline with knowledge about the Gacaca law.

**There is overwhelming readiness to participate in the gacaca process.**

There is an overwhelming willingness to participate in the election of gacaca judges and in the provision of evidence before the gacaca tribunals. While this is encouraging, the challenge will be to maintain such a positive disposition and eventually translate these intentions into action. Again, this underscores the importance of continuous monitoring of community perceptions during the gacaca campaign, identifying potential sources of negative influence and promptly addressing them.

**Radio is the most common and credible source of information.**

Radio is an appropriate channel of communication for disseminating information about the Gacaca law. The prominence of community meetings and interpersonal sources within the community justifies the use of community activities as complementary channels.

**Family members and community leadership play a significant role in decision-making about personal matters.**

Community leaders and family ties are significant influences in terms of decision-making. This finding, especially in terms of community leaders, points to the viability of using these people as change agents in the community.