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The Role of Education in Driving Conflict and Building Peace – The Case of Rwanda

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THE ROLE OF EDUCATION IN DRIVING CONFLICT AND BUILDING PEACE

THE CASE OF RWANDA

**Background Paper prepared for UNESCO for the EFA Global
Monitoring Report 2011**

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(Final version)

Executive Summary

This paper considers the relationship between education, conflict and peacebuilding in Rwanda over the last few decades. It firstly examines the role of education in the lead up to the civil war (1990-1994) and 1994 genocide. Prior to the 1990s, despite numerous educational reforms intended to democratise access to education, overall educational attainment levels remained low and there were significant inequalities of access on the basis of class, ethnicity and, to some extent, region. In addition, the curriculum disseminated an interpretation of Rwanda's history, which emphasised ethnic differences and past conflict between Hutu, Tutsi and Twa. Although there is a lack of empirical evidence about the precise links between these factors and participation in the genocide, some analysts argue that these factors combined with the ethnic differentiation practiced in some classrooms in the early 1990s, contributed to the participation of a significant number of young Rwandans in the 1994 genocide.

The civil war and genocide impacted heavily on the education sector and have resulted in poorer educational outcomes for those children affected by the violence. Since late 1994, the RPF-dominated Government has made significant progress in terms of rebuilding the education sector and broadening access to primary education, including achieving a steady increase in enrolment rates across the country and gender parity in enrolment rates by 2000/01. However, three significant challenges remain:

- (i) *Ongoing inequalities of educational opportunity in the post-primary sector:* As a result of efforts to expand opportunities in the secondary sector, enrolment rates have improved but have remained low (approx. 13% in 2007) with large disparities of access between the rich and poor and a severe lack of alternative and non-formal educational opportunities. The recent decision to expand basic education from six to nine years will help widen access, but access is likely to remain limited at the upper secondary level. Furthermore, there are some ethnic and geographical dimensions to inequalities of opportunity due to an overlap of class and ethnic divisions in contemporary Rwanda, the financial support for schooling available for (Tutsi) genocide survivors (i.e. the FARG fund), and recent changes in the language of instruction.
- (ii) *Tensions over history teaching:* In 1995, the Government placed a moratorium on the teaching of Rwandan history in schools, arguing that the previous curriculum was biased. Although in 2008, a new resource book on the history of Rwanda was produced, it has been difficult to secure official approval of a new history curriculum. In 2010, history teaching resumed in Rwandan schools, although there was only a teacher's guide and no student resource / textbooks. Overall, there appear to be tensions between a commitment to introduce more democratic, student-centred teaching methods in schools (which would permit debate of multiple versions of the past) and the Government's attempt to impose a singular "official" narrative of Rwanda's history – which has been taught via various alternative spaces (e.g. the media, genocide memorials and *ingando* re-education camps). Many analysts caution that these attempts to foreclose historical debate are unlikely to succeed and are detrimental to the reconciliation process, which remains fragile. They urge the Government to allow debate about multiple versions of the past and the ongoing realities of ethnic identification in Rwanda today.
- (iii) *Teaching methods remain largely teacher-centred,* resulting in a lack of open debate amongst pupils and poor development of the critical thinking skills needed for independent thought.

Overall, there is concern that, despite progress in the education sector, the remaining challenges mirror some of those that were present in the pre-genocide period. There is therefore a risk that, instead of playing a positive role in building peace, some dimensions of current education policy and practice may continue to exacerbate tensions that could contribute to future violence. The paper therefore urges the Rwandan Government and its international development partners to be more open about the ongoing ethnic tensions in Rwandan society and the fragility of the reconciliation process. All parties need to subject education policies (and other sectoral policies) to a more rigorous assessment of their potential impact on fragile social relations and to embrace opportunities for education to play a more central role in peacebuilding. Key priorities are: (i) Expanding opportunities at post-primary/post-upper secondary level, especially vocational and other alternative or non-formal forms of education; (ii) Addressing ongoing inequalities of access to (upper) secondary education by giving financial support to all children in need, irrespective of their ethnic background or past experience; (iii) Ensuring measures are put in place to ensure the new language policy does not create tensions by putting certain groups at an advantage or disadvantage; (iv) Introducing the new history resource book, materials and methods produced in the UCB-funded project; and (v) Supporting wider dialogue and peace education projects for children and young people, encouraging them to discuss and move beyond the conflict and tensions of the past and present.

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Abbreviations and Acronyms

CERAI = *Centres d’Enseignement Rural et Artisanal Intégrés*

EFA = Education for All

gacaca = a form of community level courts that have been used to judge crimes of genocide across the country between 2005 and 2008.

MDG = Millenium Development Goal

MINEDUC = Ministry of Education, Rwanda

NURC = National Unity and Reconciliation Commission

NUR = National University of Rwanda

PRSP = Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper

RPA = Rwanda Patriotic Army, the armed wing of the Rwanda Patriotic Front during the civil war

RPF = Rwandan Patriotic Front, the current ruling political party in Rwanda

UCB = University of California at Berkeley

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1.0 Introduction

This paper builds on the growing literature on the relationship between education and violent conflict (e.g. Bush and Saltarelli, 2000; Davies, 2004; Smith and Vaux, 2003; Tawil and Harley, 2004; Weinstein et al, 2007). This literature firstly outlines the ways in which education can play a role in exacerbating the factors that lead to violent conflict. This “negative face” of education includes a number of dimensions such as: uneven access to education between ethnic, religious or regional groups; the denial of education as a weapon of war; the manipulation of the curriculum – especially history teaching - for political purposes; and the use of a pedagogic style which discourages critical thinking and open debate (Bush and Saltarelli 2000: pp9-16; Weinstein et al, 2007: pp43-48). The literature then outlines the negative impact conflict has on educational outcomes and explores the “positive face” of education in terms of its potential to contribute to conflict prevention and peacebuilding through, for example: widening access to educational opportunities to reduce tensions between groups; using the curriculum to cultivate tolerance and an inclusive sense of citizenship; teaching peace education, mediation and conflict resolution skills; and using democratic teaching methods to promote debate and critical thinking (Bush and Saltarelli 2000: pp16-21; Weinstein et al, 2007: pp43-48).

Most analysts recognise the important role schools can play in conflict prevention, conflict resolution and promoting social cohesion, but stress that schools do not function in isolation and that formal education must be recognised as one of many “spaces” in which children are socialised and learn about how group differences and conflicts are perceived and managed (Bush and Saltarelli 2000; Smith and Vaux 2003). Furthermore, various case studies of educational policy reform in post-conflict countries illustrate just how difficult the process of strengthening the contribution of schools to social reconstruction and reconciliation can be (e.g. see examples in Stover and Weinstein, 2004; Tawil and Harley, 2004). As the case of Rwanda illustrates, this is particularly true when the socio-political environment is not conducive to these endeavours (Weinstein et al, 2007: p49; Freedman et al 2008), when the fragility of the reconciliation process is not openly acknowledged, and where educational policy is largely segregated from the wider peacebuilding project and thus, its potential “negative” and “positive” faces are neither acknowledged nor addressed.

This paper considers the relationship between education and conflict in Rwanda over the last few decades, drawing on the growing literature on this topic and recent empirical research conducted in Rwanda. It firstly looks at what is known about the role of education in the lead up to the civil war (1990-1994) and 1994 genocide. It then examines the impacts of the civil war and genocide on the education sector and educational outcomes in Rwanda and the strategies the post-genocide Government has put in place to rebuild the education sector. It focuses particularly on three specific challenges: (i) Ongoing inequality of educational opportunity – particularly in terms of access to (upper) secondary and tertiary education; (ii) Curricular reforms and the controversy over history teaching; (iii) The ongoing lack of democratic teaching methods. In this respect, the paper focuses primarily on school-based education, but also looks at the linkages to other forms of education – such as the role of the *ingando* “re-education camps”. The paper concludes with a brief discussion of the implications of these findings for policy and practice in contemporary Rwanda.

2.0 The role of the education system in conflict and genocide in Rwanda

Before colonialism and the arrival of European missionaries in Rwanda in the late 19th century, education provision was informal. In the late 1880s, the White Fathers set up the first Catholic missionary school near Nyanza and by 1918, there were almost a dozen missionary schools operating in the country. Between 1919 and 1943, the Belgian colonial administration permitted the missionaries to continue to establish and run schools across Rwanda under its indirect control (Erny 2003; Walker-Keleher 2006). In addition to basic schooling for the masses, the missionary schools included post-primary education to educate an African clergy and administrators to take up posts in the Belgian system of indirect rule. During this period both the missionaries and the Belgian colonial authority favoured the incumbent Tutsi elite, and places in these post-primary institutions went almost exclusively to Tutsi (Hoben 1988 in Walker-Keleher 2006; see also Erny 2003). For example, at the prestigious Astrida College, which educated Rwandans for roles in the colonial administration, 80-95% of students were Tutsi until the late 1950s, although the Tutsi were estimated to have made up 10-15% of the population at that time (Walker-Keleher 2006: p37-38).

It is important to acknowledge that the history of ethnic identification in Rwanda is complex and contested. Whilst it is broadly agreed that the labels “Hutu”, “Tutsi” and “Twa” existed prior to the colonial period, there is disagreement over the precise nature and meaning of these labels in the pre-colonial period, the extent to which groups labelled “Hutu”, “Tutsi” or “Twa” possessed characteristics of “ethnic” groups, and

the degree of movement of individuals between groups (Eltringham 2004; Newbury 1998) - although the situation was unlikely to have been even across Rwanda (Newbury 1988). However, it is broadly agreed that the differences between these groups were *racialised*, accentuated and institutionalised under Belgian colonial rule. For example, during the 1933 census, every Rwandan was issued with an “ethnic” ID card, effectively “fixing” their “ethnic” identity as “Hutu”, “Tutsi” or “Twa” in the eyes of the state and making further movement between categories difficult (Mamdani 2001: pp98). Furthermore, until the last years of colonial rule in the late 1950s, the Belgian administration largely favoured the incumbent Tutsi elite, implementing a series of reforms that accorded them greater power and opportunity.

At independence in 1962, following the violent “social revolution” of 1959, the government (assisted by the Belgians who had begun to support the Hutu) came under the control of a Hutu elite, determined to end the political and economic dominance of the Tutsi and prioritise the education of the Hutu majority. At this point, Rwanda had hundreds of primary schools and around 40 secondary schools, almost all owned by the churches. The 1962 constitution of the new Hutu Republic declared primary education free and obligatory and in 1963, the first national university was established (Erny 2003; Walker-Keleher 2006: p38). Over the next three decades a series of educational reforms were undertaken under the First Hutu Republic (1962-1973) and Second Hutu republic (1973-1994). According to official discourse, the goals of these reforms included universal education and equality of opportunity, in order to support rural and community-based development, instil national values of humanity and equal respect for intellectual and manual work, and better integrate the political elite with the population (Erny 2003: p294). In reality, however, these goals were not attained. Instead the trend was for inequitable access and the perpetuation of structural inequality and exclusion on the basis of wealth, region and ethnicity – with the previously favoured Tutsi losing the privileges they had enjoyed prior to 1959 (Erny 2003; Muhimpundu 2002; Obura 2003).

2.1 Low educational attainment and structural exclusion

Access to primary education was initially expanded after Independence, but this failed to keep pace with population growth and school enrolment rates at both primary and secondary level dropped during the First Hutu Republic.¹ Although there was some improvement during the first years of the Second Hutu Republic,² competition for secondary school places was very high and a source of great frustration. Overall, the limited number of secondary school places, the excessively high costs for secondary and tertiary education and the expansion of fee-paying private education meant that only wealthy elites (and a very limited number of highly-motivated individuals) could access secondary education (Obura 2003: p41). In addition, the continuation of imported schooling practices, the poor teacher training, the marginalisation of national culture and the *kinyarwanda* language,³ and the draconian selection system acted as further barriers to the educational progression of the majority of the population (Erny 2003: p294-295). Furthermore, whilst in theory primary education was free and compulsory, in reality, parents had to pay fees in addition to other direct and indirect costs, which were prohibitive for many poor families.⁴ In short, “the whole system was oriented towards the promotion of a minority elite, estranged from their wider milieu, imbued with a sense of superiority, cut off from the masses, seeking to align themselves with the exterior... worrying above all about the equivalence of diplomas with those in Europe and America and seeking to live in urban areas and fill priority posts in the national administration” (Erny 2003: p295, author’s translation).

In 1978-79 reforms were undertaken in an attempt to address the growing problem of a large rural youth population without access to educational or employment opportunities. The Government added two years of training in agriculture and vocational skills to the primary curriculum and developed a vocational education system called the *Centres d’enseignement rural et artisanal intégrés* (CERAI), intended to produce “modern farmers or local artisans in their place of origin” (Hoben 1989:108). However, these reforms were poorly implemented and left both primary school and CERAI leavers inadequately prepared for employment, and

¹ Erny (2003: p118) gives the following statistics: Primary ‘scolarisation’ rates (gross primary intake rates) dropped from 63.9% in 1964-65 to 40.8% in 1974-75; the proportion of primary leavers continuing to secondary school dropped from 15% in 1961-62 to 5.25% in 1970-71.

² Obura (2003: p41) cites data from an earlier study by Ozinian and Chabrilac (1975) on net enrolment rates. In 1969/1970, this data suggests the net enrolment rate for primary (8-12 years) was 98% and secondary (13-19 years) was 2%; in 1975/1976, the net enrolment rate for primary level (8-12 years) was 97%, but for secondary pupils (13-19 years) was 11% (NB It is not clear where the discrepancies with Erny’s figures originate – although it is likely to be to do with different methodologies of measurement).

³ From 1966 to 1979, Kinyarwanda was the language instruction for primary grade 1 to 3 only and then French was the language of instruction from grade 4 onwards. However, the education reforms of 1978/79 made *Kinyarwanda* the language of instruction for all 8 years of the new primary system (Erny 2003).

⁴ Obura (2003: p 40) states that in the early 1990s, parents had to pay 300 FRW per term (\$5 per year).

those continuing their education inadequately prepared for secondary education (Erny 2003). In particular, CERAI courses were not linked to demands in the local employment market and government policies on internal migration restricted the movement of CERAI graduates, exacerbating the problem of rural unemployment (Hoben 1989: p113). For the bulk of primary school leavers who did not attend either secondary school or the CERAI, there were very limited options aside from the *Centres de Formation des Jeunes* (CJF), organized by the Ministry of Youth and cooperatives, which provided limited courses in practical skills and cooperative organization to out-of-school youth (ibid. p88). The very limited data available on the situation of rural youth in pre-genocide Rwanda suggests that they subsisted in rural areas with very limited prospects for advancement (Sommers 2006a).

The wider literature on education and conflict suggests that there is a relationship between low levels of educational attainment and a higher risk of conflict (e.g. Barakat and Urdal, 2008; Collier 2006).⁵ There is also both quantitative (e.g. Thyne 2006)⁶ and qualitative evidence (e.g. Dupuy, 2008)⁷ to suggest that unequal access to education can also increase the risk of violence. In the case of Rwanda, whilst there has not been a comprehensive study to explicitly examine the linkage between low educational opportunities or inequality of access to education and the 1994 genocide, we know that the majority of the militia who carried out the genocide were unemployed, undereducated youth. Indeed, several authors argue that the increasing numbers of frustrated rural youth with few educational and employment prospects played a key role in the scale of the genocide (Des Forges, 1999; Mamdani 2001; Sommers, 2006a; Uvin 1998).

2.2 The “ethnic quota” system: Did this contribute to the conditions for violence?

In the aftermath of the 1994 genocide, there has been a particular focus on the “regional and ethnic quota” policy (*iringaniza*)⁸ that was instituted after independence. This policy stipulated that (as Tutsis officially constituted 9% of the population) there could be no more than 9% Tutsi students in schools, 9% Tutsi clerks in the civil service, or 9% Tutsis in any sector of employment. In practice, however, the limited evidence available suggests that this policy was implemented sporadically – particularly under the First Hutu Republic. Although Tutsis were certainly disadvantaged compared to the past, it seems that in some cases they still occupied more than their allotted share of educational and employment places (Chrétien 1985: pp158-9 in Prunier 1995: p60, note 35). However, in 1973, in the face of increasing political pressures, the Kayibanda regime used this quota policy⁹ as an excuse to instigate a mass purge of Tutsis from university, the church and other public posts (Prunier 1995: pp60-61).

Under the Second Hutu Republic (1973-1994), as part of the 1978/79 educational reforms, the new public education law stipulated that the transition from primary to secondary education should be guided by the following criteria: examination results, continuous assessment, and ethnic, regional and gender quotas (Rutayisire et al, 2004). Whilst on the surface, these criteria appeared to provide a transparent method for determining who would go to schools, examination results were often not published, and there is evidence that these criteria were used by the authorities to discriminate against Tutsi students, especially towards the end of the 1980s and in the early 1990s. For example, figures on primary school enrolment by province and ethnic identity in 1989/1990 suggest that Tutsi quotas for schooling were at levels below their demographic representation and that the situation was worsening. In 1989/90, 7.4% pupils in P1 were Tutsi and 91.4% Hutu. Across P1-P6, 9.4% pupils were Tutsi and 89.9% Hutu (MINEPRISEC 1990: p63 in Obura, 2003: p44). Mugesera (2004) also publishes statistics to illustrate the impact of the quota policy on the access of

⁵ In a large econometric study of 47 of 73 civil wars between 1965-199, Collier (2006) found that conflict is concentrated in countries with little education. He calculates that a country which has ten percentage points more of its youth in schools – for example, 55% rather than 45% - decreases its risk of conflict from 14% to 10%. In another econometric study, Barakat and Urdal (2008) concluded that countries with (male) youth bulges and low secondary education are more at risk of conflict.

⁶ In a quantitative cross-national analysis, Thyne (2006) looks at the ways in which education affects the probability of civil war onset and argues that educational investment signals that the government cares about the population and is attempting to improve their lives, thereby lowering grievances. He also finds that education generates economic, political and social stability by teaching people skills of working together peacefully and resolving disputes. Thyne concludes that “educational investment indeed lowers the probability of civil war, especially when it is distributed equitably”.

⁷ Dupuy (2008) looks at the relationship between educational exclusion and the dynamics of violence in Guatemala, Liberia and Nepal. In all cases, she traces a link between the exclusion of indigenous, non-urban and non-elite groups from education and armed rebellion. She argues that educational inclusion in the formal education system can redress motivations and eliminate opportunities to engage in armed conflict.

⁸ The Kinyarwanda word “*iringaniza*” roughly translates as “social justice”.

⁹ Erny (2003: p127) says that the Government also used the 1970-71 education statistics to justify its actions, which suggested that Tutsis occupied a greater proportion of secondary places than their quota.

Tutsi secondary leavers to tertiary education. For example, in 1981-82, across seven communes of Butare and Gikongoro provinces, Mugesera found that only 44 of the 186 Tutsi students who successfully passed their exams (23%) continued to Tertiary education. In 1982-83, his figures show that only 28 of 424 students (6.6%) at the National University of Rwanda (NUR) in Butare were Tutsi.

Whilst it is clear from the existing literature that the Tutsi population faced worsening opportunities and increased discrimination in the educational system in the post-independence period, there is no empirical evidence about the precise linkages between this discrimination and the civil war and genocide of the 1990s. It is certainly possible that this discrimination at the hands of the Hutu regime encouraged the several thousand young Tutsi men who are estimated to have left Rwanda in the early 1990s to join the (mainly Tutsi) Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) rebel army. However, there is disagreement in the literature about the extent to which ethnic discrimination really motivated the genocide. For example, Uvin (1997: pp100-103) argues that between Independence and the 1990s, there was a high degree of structural violence in Rwanda, including a strong “anti-Tutsi prejudice”, which contributed to the genocide. On the other hand, based on their empirical work in Rwanda, both Straus (2006) and Fujii (2009) conclude that ethnic discrimination or divisions did not play a primary role in motivating those who participated in the genocide. Based on my own empirical research, I argue elsewhere that, although the genocide resulted from a culmination of factors, ethnic divisions did play a role in the violence (McLean Hilker 2009b). I argue that, over time, particular essentialist “ethnic” constructs and stereotypes became attached to the categories “Hutu”, “Tutsi” and “Twa” and were reworked and reproduced by the organisers of the genocide in their quest to justify the violence and mobilise civilians to participate in the slaughter including of their former social intimates.

2.3 Teaching practice and the history curriculum

Rutayisire et al (2004: p332) cite a number of ways in which they believe the pre-genocide education system contributed to conflict and genocide including teaching practice: “ethnically defined pupil identification files, biased access to national examinations, violent forms of punishment, discriminatory policy, as well as biased content pertaining to the teaching and learning of history and events”. It is hard to find any reliable data about teaching practices in the pre-genocide era, although a number of qualitative studies – including my own research (McLean-Hilker 2009b) – include testimonies from individuals who recall that their ethnic identity was recorded on their school file before 1994 (see also Walker-Keleher 2006) and that teachers sometimes segregated the class into Hutu and Tutsi pupils (see also Des Forges 1999). However, these testimonies mostly refer to the period immediately before the genocide (1990-1994) when ethnic tensions grew due to the civil war. Beyond this, a few authors (e.g. Walker-Keleher 2006) hypothesise a link between the teacher-centred pedagogy of the pre-genocide years, which emphasised rote learning rather than critical thinking, and the behaviour of genocide perpetrators, which has often been portrayed as “unquestioning”, “obedient” or “conformist” (e.g. Prunier 1995). For example, Muhimpundu (2002: pp154-155) argues that the top-down teaching style and curricular content of the post-independence years resulted in a “responsibilisation” of the state and “de-responsibilisation” of the people, reinforcing a spirit of submission among the population. However, Straus (2006) argues against such assertions about the “obedient masses” and argues that, although the centralised state was effective at mobilising the population, many perpetrators took what they saw as rational decisions to participate in the genocide, given the pressures they were under.

In terms of the history curriculum, Gasanabo (2004) undertakes a thorough analysis of both textbooks and associated teaching materials in use in Rwanda between 1962 and 1994. In line with arguments by other authors (e.g. Rutayisire et al, 2004; Rutembesa, 2002), his analysis suggest that the history taught at both primary and secondary levels propagated a version of the past based largely on colonial stereotypes and interpretations of Rwandan history, which supported the political ideology and rhetoric of the Hutu regimes in power during that period. This version of history emphasised the separate geographical and racial origins of Rwanda’s “ethnic” groups,¹⁰ portraying the Tutsi as outsiders who conquered the Hutu and Twa and imposed feudal rule, exploiting and oppressing the Hutu peasantry. It describes how the German and Belgian colonial regimes favoured the Tutsi and exacerbated “ethnic” divisions further, until the 1959 “social revolution” when the Hutu majority rebelled and took power to end the hegemony of the Tutsi monarchy and establish “democratic” rule by the majority Hutu population (Eltringham 2004; Rutembesa 2002).

¹⁰ Colonial interpretations of history portrayed the Twa as the autochthones, the Hutu as having settled in Rwanda between the 7th and 10th century and the Tutsi arriving between the 10th and 14th century and conquering the Hutu to establish a Tutsi monarchy.

Several authors illustrate how these historical narratives featured heavily in the genocidal propaganda of the early 1990s and argue that they played a fundamental role in instilling an ideology of ethnic division and fear among the Hutu population (Chrétien et al 1995: pp217-248; Des Forges 1999: p73, pp81-82; Uvin 1997: p102). Mamdani (2001: pp230-233) argues that the genocidal propaganda was designed to invoke and play on people's deep-seated fears – especially those of the educated and professional middle classes - by suggesting that the gains of the 1959 “revolution” were under threat because the RPF rebel army was intent on restoring a Tutsi-dominated regime and once more consigning the Hutu population to a life of forced labour and feudal servitude. Chrétien et al (1995: pp151-162) demonstrate how the genocidal propaganda reproduced ethno-racial stereotypes, which dated from the colonial period and were propagated during the Hutu Republic, to stress the danger represented by “*the Tutsi*” because of their supposed innate nature: their propensity to rule, intelligence, malice, ingratitude, hypocrisy and superiority.

As discussed above, there is no empirical evidence of a direct link between the pre-genocide history curriculum and popular participation in the genocide. Nonetheless, it is clear that school classrooms were one of a number of public spaces in which the Hutu regime's historical narrative about previous ethnic conflict, Tutsi dominance and malignancy was reinforced and propagated. It is also probable that the teacher-centred pedagogy reinforced a top-down system of governance (see Straus 2006), which was able to rapidly mobilise a significant number of civilians to participate in the genocide.

3.0 The impact of the civil war and genocide on Rwanda's education system

Rwanda's school system was severely damaged as a result of the civil war and 1994 genocide. A significant amount of infrastructure was destroyed, 75% of teachers were killed or jailed for alleged participation in the genocide (Freedman et al 2004: 250), and 70% children interviewed reported having witnessed violent injury or death (Obura 2003: 50). Akresh and de Walque (2008)¹¹ assess the impact of the war and genocide on children's schooling by comparing data from two household surveys conducted prior to (1992) and after (2000) the genocide. Controlling for baseline schooling levels and the variation of genocide intensity across the country, they look at cohorts of school age children affected by the genocide, and conclude that the genocide had a strong negative impact on schooling with exposed children completing on average almost a half-year less education (a 18.3% decline in educational achievement). They also conclude that exposed children were 15% less likely to finish 3rd or 4th grade (a 37.8% drop in achievement relative to baseline completion rates). Akresh and de Walque (2008) suggest the most likely explanation is a failure of children exposed to the genocide to progress through the grades of the school system, a hypothesis consistent with the high repetition rates in Rwanda since the genocide. They argue that this drop in achievement is likely to have a long-term welfare impact in Rwanda in terms of adult wages and productivity.

4.0 Educational reforms in post-genocide Rwanda and their role in building peace

In July 1994, the genocide ended with the victory of the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF), who installed a transitional Government of National Unity. In the education sector, the Government was faced with the dual challenge of getting children back into school and dealing with the legacies of a system that had largely been based on inequality and discrimination. In September 1994, the Ministry of Education re-opened primary schools and worked to attract children back into school – a difficult task in a context where many schools had been the sites of atrocities during the genocide (Obura 2003). Since this time, the Government has worked hard to achieve its stated goals of broadening access to education through abolishing fees at primary level.¹² improving the quality of education (Hodgkin 2006; World Bank 2004) and, more recently, extending free basic education from six to nine years, comprising primary and lower secondary education.

Perhaps the most impressive area of progress has been the rapid growth in enrolment rates, especially at primary level. There are a number of figures available for different periods, which vary according to the means of measurement, but all show a positive upward trend. For example, the World Bank (2004) reported that, by 1999, the number of children in primary school had already surpassed the number that would have been enrolled had the system expanded at historical rates of increase, and that in 2001, the gross enrolment ratio was 107%. Figures provided in Rwanda's latest PRSP (Republic of Rwanda 2007), show that the net

¹¹ Although this study has been critiqued for its methodological limitations.

¹² The Government has implemented a policy of fee-free primary education in which school fees have been abolished and replaced by a capitation grant, which increased to 2,500FRw (US\$4.50) in 2006. Shortfalls in financing at the school level nevertheless persist, with parents sometimes invited to contribute to finance this gap. Non-fee barriers to primary education also remain and are thought to have some effect on access to education (for example, the cost of school uniforms and learning materials) (Hodgkin 2006).

primary enrollment rate (NER) increased from 74% in 2000/01 to 86% in 2005/06¹³ and that completion rates – which had been relatively poor - improved to 42%. Another key area of success has been the achievement of gender parity in enrolment at primary level in 2000/2001 - although girls still lag behind boys in completion rates. Overall, however, some quality issues clearly remain with a high repetition rate (20% in 2004) and high dropout rate (15% in 2004) (Obura and Bird 2009).

Rwanda's PRSP (2007) and recent education sector strategy (Republic of Rwanda 2008a) set out the following priorities: to continue to make progress towards the target of free and universal primary education for all by 2015 and to expand opportunities in the secondary sector. As discussed above, historically, a very small proportion of primary school leavers have entered or completed secondary education. The World Bank (2004: p3) reported that at secondary level, the number of students grew at 20% per year between 1996-2001 - although the overall enrolment ratio at secondary level remained low at 13%. Between 2000/01 and 2005/06, the Government increased the number of teachers in the secondary sector by 40%, the number of qualified teachers by 45%, and the number of schools by 47% (PRSP, Republic of Rwanda 2007: p23). The Government's aim is for all children to complete nine years of free basic state education (six years primary plus three years (*tronc commun*) at lower secondary). So far, however, the effect of policy changes has been modest with the net secondary school enrolment rate (NER) increasing from 7% in 2000/01 to 10% in 2005/06 (*ibid.*) and 13% in 2007 (MINEDUC 2008c). There has also been an expansion of private secondary education, particularly at upper secondary level. Overall, however, there remains a disparity in enrolment in secondary schooling between the richest and poorest households. In 2005/06, net secondary school enrolment among children from the highest consumption quintile was ten times higher (26%) than among children from the lowest quintile (2.6%) (*ibid.*).

Since 1994, a key priority of the Government has also been to expand tertiary education. The World Bank (2004) reports that enrolments in higher education increased from 3,400 students in 1990-91 to almost 17,000 by 2001-2002. The Rwandan Government reports that the number of students in 18 higher education institutions (six of which are public) increased from an estimated 10,000 in 2002 to 27,787 in 2005 (PRSP, Republic of Rwanda, 2007). It points out, however, that although the gross enrolment rate at tertiary level is 3.2%, which is regionally comparable, the 2003 census showed that only 0.5% of the population had a university degree. The Government's focus on tertiary education and the establishment of new tertiary institutions since 2000 has been a source of tension with the donor community, who have argued that the high spending on tertiary education perpetuates structural inequality in the education system.¹⁴ However, in 2010, the Rwandan Government shifted resources from the tertiary sector to the primary sector – partly through a forthcoming cut of 75% of state bursaries for tertiary education.

More broadly, Hayman (2007: pp372-373) notes tensions between the medium-term goals captured in the MDGs and aimed at broad poverty alleviation (through equipping all children with sufficient knowledge and skills to lead productive lives), which are the priority of most donors, and the Rwandan Government's longer-term goals of unity and reconciliation (through promoting "new values" beyond the ethnic and regional divisions of the past) and economic development (through training the skilled manpower for a service-oriented, ICT-led knowledge economy).¹⁵ On this basis, both Hayman (2007) and Schweisfurth (2010: p698) question whether an exclusive focus on the MDGs is appropriate in Rwanda – although it might be argued that there is space in the MDG agenda for a longer-term focus on economic development and sustainable peace. The Rwandan Government has stated that the education sector needs to play a key role in its national reconciliation strategy in two respects: (i) eliminating negative and positive discrimination and promoting access to higher levels of education using criteria solely based on student competence; and (ii) creating a culture of peace and emphasizing positive non-violent values, solidarity and democracy (Obura and Bird 2009: pp8-9). However, there is some question over the extent to which these laudable goals have been achieved in contemporary Rwanda.

¹³ Figures from the EICV household survey. Figures from MINEDUC show a bigger improvement from 73% to 95% in this period. The differences reflect methodological differences in what is measured and may be explained by population increases.

¹⁴ For example, the World Bank (2004: p5) notes that primary education only received about 45% of the education budget in 2001, whereas higher education received nearly 40%. It also noted that only 2% of the population of the relevant age group benefited from higher education and that Rwanda's unit costs for higher education were amongst the highest in the world and 75 times the unit costs for primary education. The result was that the best-educated 10% of a cohort received more than 70% of the cumulative public spending of that cohort, making the system one of the least structurally equitable in sub-Saharan Africa (*ibid.*).

¹⁵ Hayman (2007) notes, however, that in practice, and despite rhetoric, many donors have funded areas other than basic education including overall strengthening of the system, technical education, curriculum reform and the lower secondary level (*tronc commun*).

4.1 Ongoing inequalities of educational opportunity in the post-primary sector

The Rwandan Government's policy of broadening access to education at the primary level has been largely successful and there is no empirical evidence of significant inequalities of access at this level, whether on ethnic, class or regional grounds¹⁶ – although poorer and vulnerable groups are certainly amongst those hardest to reach in terms of achieving universal access. Some analysts also agree that the emphasis on merit-based opportunity in terms of access to secondary education is gradually reducing inequalities. For example, the World Bank (2004) states that although there is still a significant disparity between rich and poor, the introduction of free lower secondary education (the *tronc commun*) should improve this over the next few years. Nonetheless, because private secondary schools make up approximately 40% of the sector (*ibid.*) and pupils have to pay fees for upper secondary education, the disparity between rich and poor in terms of formal educational opportunities at the post-primary level is likely to remain significant over years to come.

An ongoing challenge is that in spite of the measures to ensure greater transparency and accountability in the allocation of post-primary places, the actual level of access to secondary education has remained low (NER of approx. 13% in 2007) and at similar levels to before the genocide (Walker-Keleher 2006). This is compounded by the fact that there is a severe lack of alternative and non-formal education opportunities in Rwanda, whether for primary age out-of-school children, primary non-completers or primary leavers. For example, it was only in 2002 that accelerated learning classes for over-age children (age 9-16) were initiated by the Government and these only reached a very limited number of pupils (Obura and Bird 2009: pp9-10) - despite the fact that at this time an estimated 94% of adolescents of this age were out of school (Obura 2003: p92). Both the Government and donors have prioritised formal education, and neither technical nor vocational education received much attention until the Germans and Belgians recently started work in this sector (Hayman 2007: p377). In contemporary Rwanda, therefore, the reality is that there are very few educational and training opportunities for the majority of the population beyond primary (or more recently lower secondary) level. Sommers (2006a, 2006b) found that this situation, combined with an ongoing lack of livelihood and employment opportunities, is a great source of frustration for rural youth. Many of his young male interviewees were unable to build their own houses, gain independence, get married, and make the transition to adulthood. Sommers expresses concern that such frustrated expectations could once again play a role in violence in Rwanda (see also Walker-Keleher 2006).

The ethnic dimension to disparities in educational opportunities has not also necessarily disappeared. Although there is qualitative evidence to show that some of those directly involved – teachers, parents and students – are satisfied with the overall emphasis placed on merit-based opportunity and ethnic equality (e.g. Freedman 2004), there are some factors that seem to lead to potential ethnic disparities. Firstly, a number of analysts point to an overlap between class and ethnic differences in contemporary Rwanda. In contrast to the pre-genocide period, the majority of Rwanda's post-1994 political and professional elite grew up outside Rwanda. These (mainly) Tutsi "returnees" were mostly well-educated and had limited, if any, family connections in the Rwandan countryside (Prunier 1997: p7). They therefore flocked to Kigali, taking over most of the urban properties belonging to the Hutu professionals who had fled, and sought to find work in the modern administrative and business sectors in the city (*ibid.* p7). Prunier (1997: p7) argues that this has resulted in a broad dichotomization of the economy in contemporary Rwanda with the majority of the Hutu population living on the land in rural areas and a town-based monetarized economy almost entirely in Tutsi hands. Whilst there are certainly a number of wealthy Hutu in contemporary Rwanda, my own recent research in Kigali suggests that there is a continued perception that Tutsi returnees dominate most economic sectors in Rwanda today (McLean Hilker 2011b forthcoming). Given that many of the fee-paying private schools are located in Kigali and beyond the income levels of most Rwandan families, it is likely that a disproportionate number of students in secondary school today are from Tutsi families.

In my own interviews with young Rwandans in Kigali in 2004/05 and 2010/2011, I found that whilst most young people felt that there was indeed greater equality and merit-based opportunity at the lower (i.e. primary) level of the system, they felt that this did not carry to the higher levels of the system due to a combination of financial barriers to access and some nepotism among (Tutsi) political elites in terms of the allocation of study bursaries for universities abroad (McLean Hilker 2009b). The challenge is that - given the Government's policy of eliminating ethnic categories in contemporary Rwanda (see next section), there are no statistics available that officially document the ethnic affiliation of students in state or private secondary schools or tertiary institutions – levels of ethnic equality or inequality are hard to verify.

¹⁶ Although there is no data which is disaggregated by ethnicity or place of origin.

A second factor that came up frequently in my own research with young Rwandans in Kigali in 2004-05 and 2010/2011 (McLean Hilker 2009b, 2011b forthcoming) was the bursaries for school fees accorded to genocide survivors under the *Fonds National pour l'Assistance aux Rescapés du Genocide* (FARG). This fund was set up in 1998 to aid victims of the genocide and pays school fees¹⁷ and supplies to children “in need” who lost at least one parent in the genocide. Whilst in theory the FARG can be allocated to both the (tens of thousands of) Tutsi genocide survivors and the (thousands of) Hutu survivors whose families were killed due to their political opinions or opposition to the genocide (Rombouts 2006: pp214-251), in practice there is evidence that Hutu children who survived the genocide have been unable to access the fund (Amnesty International 2004; McLean Hilker 2009b). Furthermore, whilst the FARG is an important (but insufficient)¹⁸ form of compensation for genocide survivors, there is no equivalent compensation mechanism for the thousands of Hutu (and mixed heritage) children who lost one or both parents during the civil war of 1990-1994 and in its aftermath in Zaire in 1996-1997, including in attacks conducted by the Rwandan Patriotic Army (RPA)¹⁹ (Rombouts 2006: p229-230).

My research suggests that this has had a very concrete impact in school classrooms in Rwanda over the past few years – especially in fee-paying state secondary schools. It has effectively meant that Tutsi pupils who are genocide survivors have had their schools fees, transportation and supplies paid for, yet many Hutu children who are survivors of the wider civil war and RPA killings have not had this support and, in many cases, have therefore not been able to attend school. Although there has been limited funding for schooling from the Ministry of Local Government (MINALOC) for poor and orphaned children, in practice very few children seem to receive this. Although this only directly affects a few thousand pupils, my research suggests that it has created significant tensions and a visible divide between the “FARG children” and “non-FARG children” in many school classrooms (see also IRDP 2003; Walker-Keleher 2006: p46). It also reinforces a wider sense of injustice felt by many young Hutus, who lost family in the civil war and as a result of RPA killings, and yet are not acknowledged as survivors and therefore excluded from the mechanisms of reconciliation and compensation (e.g. memorials, *gacaca*), which only recognise (Tutsi) genocide survivors (Buckley-Zistel 2006; McLean Hilker 2009b).²⁰

These tensions appear to be made worse both by the fact that “Tutsi survivor” status in contemporary Rwanda is often interpreted in a very broad manner – and thus many Tutsi “returnees” have received the FARG even though they were not in Rwanda during the genocide. There have also been problems with the way the FARG was sometimes administered in schools. Many of my young interviewees described how “FARG pupils” were often grouped together in front of their class or school, for example, on the day fees are due, to receive their supplies or to be called for a meeting. Those Rwandans who are entitled to the FARG have also carried a FARG identity card. Thus, given that (almost) every person that gets the FARG is Tutsi, the FARG card effectively replaces the Tutsi ID card carried before the genocide. Taken together, these practices have yet again differentiated between Rwandans in a highly visible manner using proxies, but on an essentially “ethnic” basis (i.e. “FARG people”/“non-FARG” people = Tutsi/Hutu) in classrooms and neighbourhoods across Rwanda. The classroom practices described also bear striking similarities to the way school children were separated into groups of Hutus and Tutsis or called away to “meetings” prior to and during the genocide. Overall, more than a quarter of the young people I interviewed reported problems and conflicts in their school, or a school they knew, related to the FARG (McLean Hilker 2009b: pp222-227).

Finally, the third factor that is likely to impact on equality of educational opportunity over the next few years is the recent change in the language of instruction. In the mid-1990s, in an effort to absorb returning refugees from Anglophone countries,²¹ foster unity and support economic and political relations with both its

¹⁷ The FARG paid primary school fees prior to their abolishment and now pays secondary school fees as well as covering the costs of uniforms, books and transport for qualifying children at both primary and secondary level.

¹⁸ Many authors discuss the marginalisation of genocide survivors in contemporary Rwanda – especially women and girls who suffered sexual violence and were deliberately infected by HIV/AIDS – and call for proper state compensation (e.g. Kayitesi-Blewitt 2006; Rombouts 2006; Schimmel 2010).

¹⁹ The RPA was the armed wing of the RPF, which fought the civil war against the Government of Rwanda from 1990-1994 and brought the RPF to power in July 1994. There has been no proper investigation into the killings committed by RPF soldiers in this period, which is a big source of discontent among the Hutu population, who feel there is no accountability or justice for their losses.

²⁰ This appears to be further reinforced by recent Government discourse, which has reintroduced “ethnicised” language by specifically referring to the genocide as “Tutsi genocide” (Waldorf 2009: p104).

²¹ After the RPF victory in July 1994, an estimated 700,000 – 1 million (mainly Tutsi) refugees “returned” to Rwanda after several decades in exile. Most of these refugees had lived or grown up in the English-speaking countries of Uganda, Tanzania and Kenya or the French-speaking countries of DRC and Burundi. UNCHR estimated that 810,000 of the “old-caseload” refugees had returned by 2000, but there are no precise estimates of the number of refugees from each country.

Anglophone and Francophone neighbours, the Rwandan Government instituted a tri-language policy in education. The aim was for every Rwandan child to learn Kinyarwanda, English and French in school, but implementation was a challenge. In practice, until grade four of primary school every child received instruction in his or her mother tongue (Kinyarwanda for the majority, but not for those returnees who spoke poor Kinyarwanda). After this, a child's parents selected either a school with French as the language of instruction or one of the newly instituted schools with English as the language of instruction (with the other language taught as a foreign language). For a number of years, until the Government acknowledged the problem, this effectively resulted in a form of ethnic divide, differentiating between the (almost entirely) Tutsi returnees from Anglophone countries and the (mainly) Hutu Rwandans who grew up in Rwanda and the (mainly Tutsi) returnees from francophone countries (Walker-Keleher 2006: p46).

In 2008, against a backdrop of deteriorating diplomatic relations with France, with aspirations to develop an ICT sector in Rwanda, as a new member of the East African Community (EAC) and then-aspiring member of the Commonwealth,²² the Rwandan Government announced that English would be the sole language of instruction from grade four in primary schools. The Government argues that this will contribute to growth and reconciliation because English is the leading language of science, commerce and economic development (Samuelson and Freedman 2010: p192). There are no precise estimates of the number of Rwandans today who speak French and English.²³ Most recent estimates suggest that more than 80% of the population speak only Kinyarwanda fluently,²⁴ 5-15% speak French and 2-5% speak English -²⁵ although this is clearly changing month-by-month in Rwanda today. It is clear, however, that French and English are the language of the elites and that there are overlaps between language and ethnic identity, with most English speakers being Tutsi returnees from Uganda and most French speakers being Hutu and Tutsi who grew up in Rwanda or Tutsi returnees from DR Congo and Burundi. Thus, the problem is that, for a number of years, this new language policy is likely to give a special advantage to the children of Tutsi Anglophone returnees – potentially risking exacerbating ethnic divisions and divisions between different returnees populations (Obura and Bird 2009: p10; Samuelson and Freedman 2010: p205). Furthermore, there are huge logistical challenges with the language switch with few English-speaking teachers and limited resources, which is likely to disadvantage schools and their pupils in poorer and rural areas for some time. More generally, there may also be a risk that the ongoing incorporation of systems and approaches from the Anglophone system into what is essentially a francophone education system will result in incoherence (Schweisfurth 2010).²⁶

4.2 Curricular reforms and the controversy over history teaching

In early 1995, within a year of taking power, the RPF-led Government imposed a moratorium on history teaching in Rwanda's schools, arguing that previous history lessons were biased and divisive (Buckley-Zistel 2009; Rutembesa 2002: p83). As has been the case in many post-conflict countries (e.g. Bosnia and Herzegovina, Colombia, Guatemala), the Rwandan Government argued that a new "more truthful" history must be transmitted to the next generation through a revised history curriculum in schools. It therefore suspended the teaching of the history of Rwanda until new guidelines were produced. However, Rwanda's history remains extremely contested and political elites have long deployed competing versions of the past to justify their actions (Eltringham 2004; Hodgkin 2006: p199; Newbury 1998: pp7-25). The first commission set up by the Government to reflect on a new history curriculum dissolved due to a lack of funding and subsequent seminars found it hard to reach agreement on a version of Rwanda's past. Then, in 1999, a report on meetings convened by the Office of the President (Republic of Rwanda 1999) asked the National Unity and Reconciliation Commission (NURC) to work with the National University of Rwanda (NUR) "to examine what happened in history to know the TRUTH and avoid to follow distorted history". However,

²² In November 2009, Rwanda became the 54th member of the Commonwealth in spite of a report by the Commonwealth Human Rights Institute which expressed concern about the lack of political freedom and the human rights record in Rwanda.

²³ The 2002 census did not collect data on language, probably because it is sensitive.

²⁴ In terms of those that speak only Kinyarwanda, Calvet (2006: p1972) gives a figure on 56% in Kigali and 88% for Rwanda as a whole. LeClerc (2008) puts the percentage at 90%.

²⁵ LeClerc (2008) gives the following figures: 15-20% French speakers and 2% English; Rosendal (2009) estimates that 5% population speak French; Calvet (2006) says that around 20% of the population claim to speak French and 9% claim to speak English; drawing on a range of sources Samuelson and Freedman (2010) give estimates of 1.9-5% for English speakers and 3-5% for French speakers.

²⁶ Schweisfurth (2010:p704) gives examples such as the co-existence of A-levels and Upper Secondary examinations; the modelling of the Kigali Institute of Education (KIE) on the parallel institution in Uganda; and the implementation of a Ugandan-style schools inspection system.

limited progress was made and in 2003, the Primary and Secondary School Curriculum Development Policy was still promising to provide “an objective and truthful account of Rwandan...history” (MINEDUC 2003).

Recognising this complex situation, in 2003, the Human Rights Center at the University of Berkeley (UCB), in collaboration with the National University of Rwanda (Faculty of Education) and the Rwandan Ministry of Education (MINEDUC), as well as the NGO Facing History and Ourselves (FHAO), undertook a history resources development project for secondary schools. Over a five-year period, the project convened a series of working groups comprising a variety of stakeholders (teachers, students, parents, government officials, non-governmental organizations, and historians) to help develop new history resources, including the development of teaching materials and the introduction of democratic teaching methods (Freedman et al 2006; 2008). The emphasis was on encouraging participation, debate and discussion and exploring different perspectives on Rwanda’s history. However, from the start, some participants expressed concerns about how to teach the more controversial aspects of Rwanda’s history, especially the origins of ethnic identification. Many teachers were clearly reluctant to allow for any open discussions of these issues in the classroom and were reticent to introduce any issues that could create disagreement or conflict (Freedman et al 2008: pp676-677). Despite these challenges, the project developed a resource book with materials and sample lessons covering four historical periods (pre-colonial, colonial, post-colonial, the 1990s), which were officially handed over to MINEDUC in February 2006. In 2008, the new history resource book, “The teaching of history of Rwanda: a participatory approach” (Republic of Rwanda 2008) was published. Although it has been distributed to some teachers and used in professional development, at the time of writing, although history teaching has restarted, the Government has still not yet introduced the history resource book into schools as part of the curriculum.²⁷

In their reflections on the project, Freedman et al (2008: pp774-665) identified two key tensions, which significantly affected the course of the project. Firstly, that the Government’s goal of teaching history to promote a unified Rwandan identity effectively meant that it continued to insist that only its singular “official” narrative should be transmitted; yet this conflicted with its broader aspirations to embrace modern, democratic teaching methods and foster the critical thinking thought to be essential for participation in the global economy. Secondly, that the use of history teaching to shape this new national identity did not leave any space to discuss the social realities of continuing ethnic identification and categorisation in Rwandan society in productive and non-divisive ways (see also McLean Hilker 2009a). Freedman et al (2008: p679) also discuss how the increasingly repressive political climate impacted on the project, creating a situation by 2007 where project participants were simply unwilling to contemplate teaching anything about the origins of ethnicity, because they were too afraid of arrest or intimidation.

Since 1995, the Rwandan Government has argued that promoting “unity and reconciliation” in Rwanda depends on ridding Rwanda of the “divisive” identities Hutu, Tutsi and Twa (Buckley-Zistel 2006: pp101-113) and combating the persistence of negationism and genocide denial. In 2001, the Government instituted a new law on discrimination and secretarianism,²⁸ which can and has been invoked against individuals or organisations accused of “divisionism”²⁹ and in 2003, a new law punishing the crime of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes was adopted.³⁰ In June 2004, a special commission of the Rwandan Parliament produced the first of a number of reports (Republic of Rwanda 2004) on the persistence of “genocide ideology” in Rwandan society. In 2007, after allegations in the media about the persistence of “genocide ideology” in schools, a Parliamentary Commission established an enquiry, which apparently revealed extensive “ideology” in schools “registering 90% cases in some secondary schools” (Buyinza and Mutesi 2008) and finding cases where the pre-genocide curriculum was being taught and where students were made to wear different uniforms according to their ethnic group (BBC 2008). In June 2008, this was followed by the adoption of a new law criminalizing “genocide ideology” (Human Rights Watch 2008: pp 41-43). Although the objectives of these laws – unity, reconciliation and combating negationism – are important, in practice their definitions are so broad, that they are open to political manipulation (Waldorf

²⁷ FHAO report greater success in using their “Holocaust and Human Behaviour Resource Book” as a way to support interactive teaching and the engagement of teachers with their students as adolescents – dealing with issues like bullying, fitting in, finding voice, trying to make a difference etc. (Email from Karen Murphy, see also <http://www.facinghistory.org/resources/hhb>)

²⁸ Republic of Rwanda, Law 47/2001 of 18/12/2001 instituting punishment for offences of discrimination and sectarianism

²⁹ The English version of the law reads that “secretarianism is a crime committed through the use of any speech, written statement or action that causes conflict that causes an uprising that may degenerate into strife among people.” The Rwandan Government has never defined, however, exactly what constitutes a “divisionist” act (Human Rights Watch 2003 and Waldorf 2009: p108).

³⁰ Republic of Rwanda, Law no. 33bis/2003 of 06/09/2003 punishing the crime of genocide, crimes against humanity, and war crimes, (see <http://droit.francophonie.org/doc/orig/rw/loi/fr/2003/2003dfrwlgfr1/2003dfrwlgfr1.pdf>)

2009: pp115-118).³¹ The Government has been accused of using these laws to restrict political competition, silence dissent and curb criticism of its regime by prosecuting or threatening prosecution of individuals, obliging them to quit their jobs or the country, and banning organisations and political parties.³² Given this political climate, it is easy to understand why the teachers who participated in the project initiated by UCB were increasingly reluctant to discuss anything related to ethnicity, let alone encourage debate on the topic amongst pupils in their classrooms, for fear of being charged or arrested on the grounds of promoting ‘divisionism’ (Freedman et al 2008: p665).

Although the process to formulate a new account of Rwanda’s history for the school curriculum foundered in the face of an increasingly tense political climate, in reality the Rwandan Government had been actively constructing its own “official” account of Rwanda’s history since the mid-1990s. This historical narrative has eschewed the “ethnic” categories “Hutu”, “Tutsi” and “Twa” and instead emphasised a single national group – the *banyarwanda*. It idealises a pre-colonial past when it is claimed Rwandans lived harmoniously and ethnic divisions did not exist, and blames the emergence of ethnic divisions on the colonial period. Despite the ban on history teaching in schools until 2010, the Government has actively disseminated this official narrative through multiple alternative sites of education in wider society – for example, the media, genocide memorials, *gacaca* courts,³³ and *ingando* re-education camps (see box 1) (Freedman et al 2004: p675; Weldon 2009: p182).

Box 1: Teaching history through alternative sites of education: The *ingando* solidarity camps

The Rwandan Government initially set up *ingando* “solidarity” camps in the mid-1990s as a means to try to reintegrate Tutsi returnees who had been in different countries of exile by fostering a sense of nationalism and encouraging them to embrace a pro-RPF ideology to legitimate the new Government (Mgbako 2005: p209). In 1999, the NURC took over the management of the camps and over the past decade has run separate *ingando* camps for different population groups: ex-soldiers and ex-combatants where the camps have been used as a demobilisation procedure; secondary school leavers who are about to commence state universities;³⁴ confessed *genocidaires*, where the camps have been used as a means of “re-education” before these ex-prisoners return to their communities; and a range of other groups including politicians, church leaders, community leaders, *gacaca* judges, women’s associations and prostitutes (ibid.). The *ingando* run from several days to three months and follow a similar curricular combining military style training with lessons of unity and reconciliation, history classes, present government programmes, democracy and citizenship (ibid., Buckley-Zistel 2009).

Whilst the *ingando* have a laudable stated aim of promoting social reintegration and reconciliation, critics have argued that these aims are largely unachieved because in practice the camps are to disseminate pro-RPF ideology and the “official” version of history, without allowing opportunity for debate or alternative viewpoints to be expressed (Buckley-Zistel 2009; Mgbako 2005; PRI 2004, 2005; Thomson 2010 forthcoming). Recounting her own experience of participating in an *Ingando* re-education camp in 2006 with around 100 confessed *genocidaires*, Thomson (2010 forthcoming) concludes “*ingando* does little to re-educate confessed *genocidaires* on how to reconcile with family, friends and neighbors. Instead of promoting a sense of national unity and reconciliation, it teaches these men, the majority of whom are ethnic Hutu, to remain silent and not question the RPF’s vision for creating peace and security for all Rwandans.” The history lessons Thomson (2010 forthcoming) describes being taught in the *Ingando* are very close to the “official” narrative of history that has been disseminated by the RPF-dominated Government since the mid-1990s (see Eltringham 2004; Republic of Rwanda 1999). As multiple commentators conclude, this official narrative leaves no room for multiple points of view, debate and discussion or open discussion about the realities of

³¹ Article 3 of the law which specifies the “criteria” of “genocide ideology” reads: “*The crime of genocide ideology is manifested in any behavior characterized by evidence aimed at depriving a person or a group of persons of common interest of humanity like in the following manner: 1. threatening, intimidations, degrading through defamatory speeches, documents or actions which aim at propounding wickedness or inciting to hatred; 2. marginalise, laugh at one’s misfortune, defame, mock, boast, despise, degrade, create confusion aiming at negating the genocide which occurred, stirring up ill feelings, taking revenge, altering testimony or evidence for the genocide which occurred; 3. kill, planning to kill or attempting to kill someone following the genocide ideology.*”

³² For example, in Spring 2003, the 2001 law was used to disband the *Mouvement Démocratique Républicain* (MDR) of ex-Prime Minister Faustin Twagiramungu, the key opposition party contending the 2003 parliamentary and presidential elections (Reyntjens 2004: pp180-184; Human Rights Watch 2003: pp4-9). Similarly, the 2004 parliamentary report accused a wide range of media and civil society actors – including the prominent Rwandan Human Rights organisation LIPRODHOR³² – of promoting “genocidal ideology”. As a result, in summer 2004, several of LIPRODHOR’s human rights defenders, including most of the leadership fled the country (Waldorf 2007).

³³ The *gacaca* are a form of community level courts that have been used to judge crimes of genocide across the country between 2005 and 2008.

³⁴ Approximately 3000 pre-university students attend *ingandos* each year – and many have to sit out the whole year (between and school and university) waiting for their 2-3 month *ingando*. The Government argues that *ingandos* are important for building a sense of nationhood and coexistence among young people and aspires for the whole population to complete one *ingando* in their lifetime.

(http://www.nurc.gov.rw/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=50&Itemid=12)

ongoing ethnic categorisation in contemporary Rwanda.

It is widely agreed by commentators that these attempts to impose a singular official narrative of history and close off alternative interpretations are detrimental to the reconciliation process (see also Eltringham 2004):

“A one-sided, pro-RPF interpretation of history will inspire resentment, and will be too easy to dismiss as propaganda... [people] may mouth government rhetoric, but they will not necessarily reorient themselves (Mgbako 2005: p221).

“Any history that is not multifaceted, analytical and inclusive of all opinion, and arrived at through challenging myths and critically deconstructing received truths, could easily mutate into an absolutist history of the kind that motivated and perpetuated past violence” (Hodgkin 2006: p205).

These attempts to impose a singular “official” history are also unlikely to be successful, because alternative interpretations will continue to circulate in the private sphere. As Bird (2007) finds in her research with refugees in the Great Lakes region, the primary mechanisms through which information about politics and conflict is disseminated are oral/aural i.e. gossip, traditional storytelling and radio (see also Trouillot 1997). Freedman et al (2008) cite a study by Wertsch (2000) in Estonia, which contrasted the official history taught in schools that conflicted with unofficial histories. The interviewees knew the two accounts but believed the private account that had been banned from public settings; although ironically they knew the details of the school account better. “These interviewees demonstrated what might be called a pattern of “knowing but not believing” on the case of the official history and perhaps even “believing but not knowing” in the case of the unofficial history” (Wertsch 2000 p39 in Freedman p668). Similarly, in the case of Rwanda, although in public Rwandans will give the official narrative of history (see, for example, Hodgkin 2006),³⁵ in private a diverse range of alternative versions of history circulate (McLean Hilker 2011a forthcoming).³⁶ The majority of commentators therefore urge the Rwandan Government to encourage debate on the past:

“[T]o avoid future conflict, instead of glossing over the past and pretending that Rwandans are beyond any conflicts, a more situated version of the past is required in which all members of society may recognize themselves. In order to move towards national unity and reconciliation it is not sufficient to narrate the nation whole—by using the same strategies that were deployed for its division—but to listen to the different stories that emerge from the different population groups and their particular experience as victims, perpetrators, bystanders, or heroes.” (Buckley-Zistel 2009: p48)

“In any identity-based conflict, interpretive tensions inevitably arise out of the different backgrounds of those involved. Given the likelihood of entrenched unofficial histories and varied interpretations of the same event, it is crucial to build debate and discussion into the curriculum” (Freedman et al 2008: p689).

There is growing evidence that progress towards reconciliation in Rwanda is in reality very limited (Buckley-Zistel 2009; McLean-Hilker 2009a; Waldorf 2009) and that a sense of injustice is developing as many young Rwandans – particularly Hutus – feel unable to speak about their suffering in the past and do not recognise the histories of their own families in the official narrative. In effect, the single “official” truth about the past is denying voice to or repressing the memories of particular groups in society (Freedman et al 2004: p244; Hodgkin 2006: pp 204-205). Many authors therefore agree with Government discourse that the school curriculum is a key opportunity to promote reconciliation, although they propose a completely different approach to that which has been taken i.e. allowing students to explore multiple historical understandings of the past and engage in productive discussions about ethnic identity formation and/or through the incorporation of a more explicit peace education programme into both the school curriculum and non-formal forms of education. For example, Rutaysire (then Director of Rwanda’s NCDC) et al (2004) urge teachers to discuss non-violence and negotiation strategies in schools to teach pupils conflict resolution skills. “peacebuilding education... will help to make youth capable of valuing the peaceful resolution of conflicts” (p354). However, as Obura (2003: p79) points out, these goals have largely been unfulfilled... “While peace elements and elements of the history of Rwanda are in the syllabuses, there is no

³⁵ Hodgkin (2006) examines the scripts of the results (3000 essays from secondary and tertiary students) of a writing competition run by the NGO *Never Again* where young people were asked what youth could do to make sure genocide never happens again, based on the history of Rwanda. She remarks that all essays were structured alike giving the official narrative history of Rwanda followed by lists of actions and ideals for youth (p204).

³⁶ McLean Hilker (2010 forthcoming) interviewed 46 young Rwandans and found that although the official narrative of the past was commonly cited, many individuals offered alternative versions of history including narratives close to that of the former regime.

evidence that they are being taught, and informal observations of the author would indicate that they are not being taught".³⁷

4.3 Teaching methods remain largely teacher-centred

In addition to the content of the school curriculum, a number of authors argue that it is important to consider teaching style (pedagogy) as well as what is taught. It is precisely because schools in post-conflict societies tend to operate in an atmosphere of fear and passivity, that it is important for teachers to reinforce the need to participate in society: "Pedagogy that emphasizes rote learning, uncritical thinking, and the authority of a narrowly defined, 'true' narrative is unlikely to permit new understandings of former enemies and promote social reconstruction" (Cole and Barsalou 2006: p10). Rutayisire et al (2004) recommended that Rwandan schools should emphasize cooperative learning and group activities in order to develop "openness to others, dialogue, cooperation, negotiation and collective reconstruction" (p356). However, in spite of several statements by the Rwandan Government about the desire to teach pupils skills of critical thinking and debate,³⁸ and the efforts of the UCB project, in practice this has not been implemented and the available evidence suggests that the teaching style in Rwandan schools largely remains teacher-centred with little opportunity for student debate and discussion (Freedman et al 2008).³⁹

For example, on the basis of her own observational work in five schools and eight classes, Walker-Keleher (2006" p47) says that "each class, without exception, was characterized by a teacher-focused didactic lesson", that "drill and rote learning... is [still] the norm in Rwanda" (p48) and that there was "zero structured interaction between students" (p49). She points out that educational research stresses the importance of free student dialogue, independent thought and collaborative learning – especially on controversial issues – to pro-social interpersonal attitudes and behaviours and positive political attitudes. She expresses her concern that "instead of providing a safe space for Rwandan children and youth to explore active political discussions and engagement, schools will foster a value of submission to authoritarianism, first a teacher's and then a government's. Without opportunities for safe, collaborative learning activities, divisions between Hutu and Tutsi students will likely grow in the context of systemic triggers like access to post-primary schooling and language policy" (Walker-Keleher 2009: p51).

5.0 Conclusions and implications

In 1997, Peter Uvin wrote "*Aiding Violence*", a now infamous account of how the donor community ignored the signs of structural inequality and violence in pre-genocide Rwanda and continued to support the then Rwandan Government, parts of which subsequently implemented the 1994 genocide. In 2003, Uvin wrote a further article warning that the development community was repeating the same mistakes in its relations with the current Rwandan Government. He pointed to a lack of dialogue between international donors/diplomats and the Rwandan Government about progress with the reconciliation process and a lack of funding focused on conflict prevention and peacebuilding. Instead, Uvin (2003: p3) argued that contemporary dialogue mainly focused on issues such as "poverty reduction", "economic development" and "good governance", which have been handled in a technocratic manner. Others agree with this analysis and point out the dangers of ignoring the realities of ongoing inequalities, ethnic tensions and latent violence in Rwandan politics and society (e.g. Buckley-Zistel 2009; McLean-Hilker 2009b; Pottier 2002; Reyntjens 2004).

This review suggests that a technocratic approach also currently predominates in the education sector with a Government-led sector-wide approach focused primarily on institutional reforms and meeting the MDG targets of universal primary education and gender parity in education (Hayman 2007; Schweisfurth 2010). Given the devastating legacy of the genocide, it is clear that there has been significant progress in terms of reconstructing the education sector, expanding primary school enrolment and, more recently, expanding free basic education to nine years rather than six. However, the evidence reviewed in this paper suggests that significant challenges remain in terms of inequalities of educational opportunities at the post-primary / post-lower secondary level; poor educational prospects for the majority beyond lower secondary level; curricular reforms – especially in the area of history teaching; and pedagogy.

³⁷ Obura and Bird (2009:pp22-23) conclude that Burundi has been more successful in peace education, introducing citizenship and life skills education immediately after peace accords and improving programmes 4 years later.

³⁸ The introduction to the new history curriculum talks about this (Republic of Rwanda 2008).

³⁹ An exception to this is the Facing History (FH) Clubs that have been set up in some schools, which often meet for several hours a week and where teachers do use more participatory methods (FHAO – personal correspondence).

Furthermore, despite the Government's stated ambition that schooling should contribute to reconciliation and peacebuilding, educational policy and reforms in Rwanda appear to have been largely divorced from the wider peacebuilding project. In spite of the controversies over history teaching, there seems to be an underlying assumption that formal education is inherently a harmless neutral or positive process (Bush and Saltarelli 2000; Hodgkin 2006: p206) and the Government and its international partners do not seem to have embraced wider opportunities to implement more conflict-sensitive educational reforms - for example through integrating peace education into the curriculum (Obura 2003). As Rwanda's past suggests, factors such as low educational attainment, inequalities of access to education on class and ethnic lines, combined with a curriculum and teaching style that emphasised ethnic divisions and did not allow opportunity for debate, may have contributed to the conditions for violence.

One of the main challenges has been the political climate in the aftermath of the 1994 genocide. As Tawil and Harley (2004:p14) write, "the nature of the cessation of hostilities and of the peace achieved is crucial to defining the possibilities for social and civic reconstruction through education policy. The nature of the political settlement whether internally developed or externally imposed, has implications for the nature of political will to reform education, as well as for the construction or consolidation of legitimating mechanisms which give education policymakers a mandate for change". In contrast to other contexts - like South Africa, where the post-1994 transition period was a product of a negotiated settlement - the Rwandan conflict ended with the military victory of one party. As a result, this party has largely set the agenda for reconstruction and political transition in Rwanda. In spite of significant progress in some areas, the RPF-led governments in power since 1994 have been repeatedly criticised for exercising significant degrees of political and social control, failing to open up the political space and advance civil liberties, for example, by preventing open discussions about Rwanda's past and current politics. Thus, whereas in South Africa, although history was also removed from the school curriculum for a number of years, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) allowed for multiple voices to be heard and paved the way for a new history curriculum that attempted to provide for diverse memories of victims, perpetrators and bystanders⁴⁰ and allowed pupils to debate and interrogate history; in Rwanda, the opposite has occurred (Weldon 2009: pp180-81).

In Rwanda, the education sector actually offers important opportunities to encourage progress towards more democratic governance and genuine reconciliation. Although, many donors now deliver their aid through general and sector budgetary support, this does not foreclose opportunities to engage in dialogue with the Government about difficult issues or to support education-related initiatives by civil society and other actors at a local level. There is a need for both the current Government and donors to take seriously the ongoing potential for the nature of schooling in Rwanda to contribute to future violence and/or to future peace and to work to tackle the challenges outlined above. Key priorities include:

- (i) Expanding opportunities at post-primary /post-upper secondary level, especially vocational and other alternative or non-formal forms of education;
- (ii) Addressing ongoing inequalities of access to secondary education by giving financial support to all children in need, irrespective of their ethnic background or past experience;
- (iii) Ensuring measures are put in place so that the new language policy does not create tensions by putting certain groups at an (dis)advantage;
- (iv) In terms of history teaching, introducing the new history resources book, materials and methods produced in the UCB-funded project;
- (v) Supporting wider dialogue and peace education projects for children and young people, encouraging them to discuss and move beyond the conflict and tensions of the past and present.

Overall, both the Rwandan Government and its international development partners need to recognise that, "Education is... the early warning barometer by which... conflict can be measured. Wider social tensions or divisions are frequently reflected in the classroom, in teaching and in distribution of education resources. Analysis of the education sector... alongside other more traditional conflict assessment mechanisms can provide a 'fragility' lens through which to plan, manage and implement tolerant, inclusive, quality education programmes. These education programmes need to build resilience and social cohesion rather than creating division and conflict" (Obura and Bird (2009: p1). As a number of authors suggest, there are ongoing indications of tensions and frustrations in contemporary Rwandan society – including in school classrooms

⁴⁰ Although the development of the curriculum was also complex in South Africa.

and amongst school age children too young to remember the 1994 genocide - but at present, there is little indication that either the Rwandan Government or its international development partners have openly recognised or acted on this evidence.

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