



Global Campaign for Rwandans' Human Rights

PUSHED TO HUNGER

STARVATION IN SHADOW OF STARDOM

Hidden Famine crisis that is shattering lives in

RWANDA

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NZARAMBA

Famine in Rwanda



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Global Campaign for Rwandan Human Rights is an international human right campaign established to promote and campaign on human rights of all Rwandans.

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A

THE SITUATION OF THE FAMINE CRISIS

1. The overview

An investigation carried out by our organization, Global Campaign for Rwandan Human Rights, established that since November 2015 more than 3 Million Rwandans are at the verge of starvation and more than 150,000 Rwandans have emigrated out of the country mostly to Uganda due to a ravaging famine, particularly in the Eastern Province districts of Rwamagana, Nyagatare, Bugesera, Kayonza and Kirehe as well as Nyanza and Gisagara districts of the Southern Province of the country.

The famine was given a name and “**Nzaramba**” is a moniker now widely used among the Rwandan broad community to refer to and emphasize the acuteness of the disastrous famine as Nzaramba simply means “**I will live long**”.

Historically, a situation of scarcity of food in Rwanda has always been given a specific name only when it became widespread, spanned a long period of time and affected thousands of people.

The previous infamous famines that hit Rwanda and which were accurately recorded are known as Ruzagayura (1943-1944); Rwakayihura (1928-1930); Gakwege also known as Ntunyanjweho (1924-1926); Rumanuraimbaba (1906-1908); Ruyaga (1897-1903) and Rukungugu in middle of 19th century.

The official position of the current Government of Rwanda.

The Rwandan government blamed the climate change as the sole cause of poor harvests in some areas of Rwanda and of the continued woes expressed by distressed populations living in those impoverished areas. However, an investigation carried out by our organisation revealed that there are many more important factors behind Nzaramba famine and the increasing poverty levels in Rwanda including poor agricultural policies, decline of economy, distortion of populations on a regular basis, lack of freedom of

expression, and a political gambit to stunt populations, to name this but few.

As of today, the State refused to appeal to the international community for humanitarian food assistance to the affected population. This is due to the fact that the current Government of Rwanda has embarked on a megalomaniac economic development mission and it does not want to swallow its pride as it faces the risk of being labelled an economic failure. As a result, the Rwandan government has massively been investing in branding itself in the eyes of the International community as a shining economic example for the African continent. However, researchers are starting to piece together a darker version of the story consisting of lies and deceptions that paint a rather different picture of Rwanda. The new story is expected to debunk the much self acclaimed economic miracle as mere mirage, luring by cooked growth statistics to portray Rwanda as the Singapore of Africa, as elaborated by Himbara (2016)¹.

1 Himbara, D. (2016) Kagame economic mirage. South Carolina: Create Space Independent Publishing Platform

According to a government report², there are 44,000 poor households (nearly 225,000 individuals) that have been negatively impacted by the drought in the Eastern part of Rwanda. This report has been confirmed by WFP field visits³. We found that these reports were very limited on the real causes of food scarcity that led to the famine crisis and also had a limited visibility on the wider extent of the problem (scale of the famine as a community disaster, number and category of people affected, short to medium range impact, etc.).

It is worth mentioning that the United Nations World Food Programme did manage to respond to the crisis by providing some emergency food assistance. Even so, most of the beneficiaries of the humanitarian food aid were forced into a community labor as a compensation for the food received.

To make matters worse, the government did impose a media cover up on the crisis unfolding. This was eased by the fact that the government controls the media and limits freedom of speech

2 Government of Rwanda: Drought Assessment, 31st May to 3rd June 2016.

3 2 Joint P4P/ Vulnerability Assessment and Mapping (VAM) mission the Eastern Province, Rwanda

in the wider public. As a result, there was no coverage on the full extent of the famine in the mainstream media. In most of such situations where independent channels of information threaten to publish a version threatening to challenge the official narrative on such sensitive matters, the Gouvernement usually reacts by bluntly censoring those publications and by tagging them as rogue sources of public misinformation or rebel media funded and promoting the agendas of the enemies of the state. Yet, the Government of Rwanda behaves in such way as it fears that such a widespread information would contribute to ringing the bell and raising awareness to relevant human right watch dogs at national, regional and international level.

Such a situation prevailed until July 2016 when a Kenyan based newspaper, “The East African”, dared to publish an article on a “famine of shame” the Gouvernement sought to leave in oblivion. “The famine hit more than 100,000 in the Eastern province of Rwanda”¹⁴, the newspaper continued reading.

4 <http://www.theeastafrican.co.ke/Rwanda/News/Famine-hits-over-100-000-Rwandan-families-in-Eastern-province-/1433218-3276076-x4q4s4z/index.html>

Following suit and quite alarmingly, the investigation carried out by our organization discovered a rather worrying and underreported famine which had devastated populations on a large scale mainly from the districts cited above, claiming lives of hundreds of thousands and forcing many other several thousands into exile to neighbouring countries.

Quite shockingly, at the time of writing this story, that is, one year later following its first publication in the Kenyan media outlet, the Government of Rwanda still showed a mixed positioning on this matter before both the Rwandan and the international community.

In contrast, it is our duty to underscore that, the Government of Rwanda, through denial, neglect and misinformation about this famine, failed to be accountable not only to its people but also to the international community to which the country is tied to, through democratic governance principles and international laws it has adhered to in order to legitimate its existence.

2. Raising awareness of the International community.

According to Comprehensive Food Security and Vulnerability Analysis (CFSVA2015)⁵ by the World Food Programme, food insecurity remains a major challenge in Rwanda particularly in rural areas which have the highest percentage of poor people and extreme poverty. Household access to food is constrained by poverty, topography and scarcity of arable land, low productivity, inadequate employment opportunities, high food prices, current climate related shocks and conflict in neighbouring countries.

The extent of this situation and consequences to affected populations as well as acknowledgement of the existence of a famine crisis were missing in this WFP analysis.

As a result, we appeal for an official recognition of this famine both by the Rwandan Government

5 World food program (2015) Rwanda comprehensive food security and vulnerability analysis. http://documents.wfp.org/stellent/groups/public/documents/ena/wfp284395.pdf?_ga=2.156797563.1945942926.1493831928-1069122927.1493831928

and the concerned international players to provide social justice for the affected communities and to prevent from further disaster of the like. In fact, it is feared that a continued camouflage of such events in Rwanda would in the future result in increased unprecedented levels of human catastrophe.

3. Targeted Actions needed.

We are calling for international community **to act fast** and assist Rwandans who are starving as result of “**Nzaramba**” famine. We are calling on the government of Rwanda to appeal to the international community for emergency **food assistance** and allow it to provide **humanitarian assistance unconditionally** in the affected regions.

Alongside, we are appealing to the Governmet of Rwanda to jointly work in close collaboration with the relevant emergency and humanitarian assistance partners, at home, at regional and international level, to establish a specific support mechanism for the victims of this famine. In particular, it shall among other things seek to assess the overall level of the famine impact on the affected communities. Consistently, all involved

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partners shall work together to alleviate suffering for the victims of this famine through helping them recover from their losses. Better still, durable solutions may be found to help those who fled their communities to return home which may be possible only if safe and sustainable livelihoods are warranted both for the short and medium term perspective.

B

WHAT CAUSED THE CURRENT FAMINE IN RWANDA

1. Failed agriculture policies.

According to The Rwandan Ministry of Agriculture and Animal Resources (2010) the agricultural sector accounts for less than 35% of the gross domestic product (GDP) although it provides a livelihood to 90% of the population while only a paltry 1% of it is reserved as tradable commodity.

Although the Rwandan economy depends mainly on agriculture, which supports 80% of the workforce and produces 42% of the GDP (UNDP 2008), the agricultural sector receives a mere 3% of the national budget, a far cry from the 10% threshold recommended by the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization

(FAO). Government budget allocation in Rwanda is clearly oriented away from the food security-based priority objective of feeding the majority, and may be rather informed by other obscure motives, such as the interests of the top government officials setting forth their own agendas at the expense of the general population primary needs. . While the agriculture funding policies in Rwanda purport to address the poverty reduction objective, we find this is a sufficient evidence that the government has neglected the agriculture sector in general. In fact, we found that the agricultural sector financing in Rwanda was instead streamlined to primarily cater for the needs of the power oligarchs. As a result, the latter seem to be only concerned not with the improvement of agriculture sector policies but with the protection their power status quos.

According to the agriculture policies applying in Rwanda, the country touts to have embarked on a green revolution path. In line with this agenda, the country set spectacular agriculture transformation goals which, if achieved, are meant to contribute to transforming Rwanda into a middle income economy. On a closer look, however, the green agenda is tantamount to a bunch of

uncalled-for policies that force farmers to **adopt mono-cropping** and **to abandon their multi-cropping** system of farming. According to the Ministry of Agriculture, the green revolution was supposed to increase food productivity. However, a strong evidence abounds to suggest the result was quite the opposite.

A few years back, in light with the need to popularise the new farming methods, the Rwandan government forced farmers to recklessly venture into agribusiness enterprises without warranting them with secure safety nets in case they were not viable. The new farming business projects turned out to be a major entrepreneurial gamble, which resulted in incurring important losses to the farmers. This is because at the bottom of the production chain, no remunerative value is left for agricultural produce. – Secondly: Rwandan farmers have traditionally practiced farming methods primarily suited to ensure consistent food security. Not only did the farming practices introduced by the government destroy their food security, but also they could not facilitate the acquisition of substitute or basic food products.

In most cases, the financial income of mono-cropping methods promoted by the government did

not provide farmers with sufficient means that would enable them to compensate for the agricultural produces that they were forced to abandon. – Even though domestic labour is considered “free”, the government gives no guarantee that seeds sold to farmers are of good quality, nor does it provide an undertaking to ensure farmers leave alone to protect them from paying disproportionate high prices while buying seeds and fertilizer in the event of poor harvest.

As a consequence, it was observed that the food prices registered a steady increase and could soar up to 300% over 2 decades. A development of such magnitude is also attributable to failed agricultural policies put in place by the Government of Rwanda.

To make matters worse, a 2015 report by the Auditor General’s Office⁶ indicated that irrigation equipment procured by the government in the district of Nyagatare at a cost of Rwf2.7 billion was not put to use.

Similarly, the government had promised to help farmers acquire irrigation equipment with a

6 http://oag.gov.rw/fileadmin/user_upload/Procurement/Annual_Report_2015.pdf

subsidy of up to 50 per cent and link co-operatives to financial institutions but this is however was found to be only a pipe dream.

2. A failed agriculture and the average Rwanda starving.

The impact of a failed agricultural sector is quite difficult to hide. Consistent with the fact that agriculture absorbs more than 80% of the Rwandan productive labour, beyond doubt any dysfunction in the sector will impact immediately and significantly the livelihoods of the average population.

Such an effect is clearly observable in the consumer purchase power of the average Rwandan in as far as basic food commodities are concerned. It is by contrasting the evolution of agricultural staple commodity prices with the civil servants' wages as time elapsed that one may obtain an accurate appreciation of how the sector performed over the last several years.

Basic food commodities increasingly became unaffordable to common people due to

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stagnant salary in public services because the latter simply did not correlate with the significant increase in food prices over a long period of time.

This simply corroborates the existence of a multifaceted famine phenomenon. With time, it only became impossible for people to sustain their basic livelihoods. This is simply because the agriculture sector, the key subsistence driver of the majority population, could no longer help populations afford their basic needs.

The table below gives a snapshot of the increase of basic food items over the last 10 years. (with US \$ 1.00 = FRw 800 in 2019).

Food items	2006: Price/Kg	2017: Price/Kg	Increase
Potatoes	FRw 66	FRw 400	500%
Sweet Potatoes	FRw 58	FRw 350	503%
Green Banana	FRw 82	FRw 350	327%
Beans	FRw 173	FRw 700	300%
Charcoal	FRw 3500 /sac	FRw 8500	142%
Meat	FRw 700	FRw 2200	210%

Teacher's income (with US \$ 1.00 = FRw 800 in 2019).

Qualification	(A2) primary school teacher	(A1) a diploma holder	(A0) a graduate
Salaries/ month	FRw 44,000	FRw 90,000	FRw 120,00

The figures above show a sharp sustained increase in food prices since 2006. These are some of the basic foods consumed on daily basis by many Rwandans. Many households particularly those from the lower categories of the society, including primary school teachers, struggle to feed appropriately their families on a daily basis. To illustrate this, we shall use the example of an average household (3 people) headed by a teacher (A2), whose salary is FRw 44,000 per month, which consumes 3kg of meat/10kg potatoes/10kg sweet potatoes, 10kg of beans and uses 1 sac of charcoal, all accounting for the total monthly expenditure needs on food consumption for a typical lower income family. The total bill amounts to RWF 29,100. Yet, the family will need to pay for health insurance known as *mutuelle de santé* (FRw 9000, that is, FRw 3000 per person), school fees, clothing and other important expenditure such as house rent which,

obviously, such a meagre income can't help cover.

3. The myth of economic success shadowing an economic crisis.

Rwanda has portrayed itself as an economic lion of Africa (a Singapore of Africa as President Kagame described it) boasting an average growth of 8% of GDP for the last ten years. If real, this is undoubtedly one of the most spectacular economic performances registered today not only in Africa but across the world especially if you consider its growth span. Likewise, one may easily understand why such an economic prowess is compelling sister African countries to envy the economic model followed by Rwanda. Rwanda boasts to have built a flourishing modern economy relying on world class infrastructures, an important ICT and a conducive business environment that help boost domestic economic activity and attract foreign direct investments (FDIs).

Until today, besides the Rwandan genocide, all over the world Rwanda is increasingly becoming notorious as a surviving poor country that managed to perform an Economic miracle out

of the ashes of the 1994 Genocide. And much of those spectacular achievements are credited to the leadership of president Kagame alone. However, in the past few years, abundant reliable data have emerged to challenge the rosy picture Rwanda tends to collate on its so called booming economy. Today, there is solid evidence that the said economic progress is a fabrication of the Kagame government of which some of the renowned research international institutions have exposed its skilled craft in doctoring their country macroeconomic figures. . In fact, the Rwandan government has learned and feeds on the stunts that the world will buy into exaggerations of their achievements.

The economic growth has been inflated, statistics cooked and worst of all most of the financial institutions who have pumped enormous amounts of money into rebuilding the country know about it but have failed to denounce the country methods mostly because they are in dire need of getting a success story for the aid they give out.

We read stories about the praises and admiration from multilateral donors such as the World Bank, IMF and the European community from

time to time, about the successful economic performance made by Rwanda. Compliments made by the World Bank and IMF, as well as by the European Union that “Rwanda has been an economic success story” in the last decade have been welcomed by the Rwandan government and particularly by the President Kagame who proudly quotes those references in his economic speeches on the world stage.

In contrast, however, one would wonder if Rwanda’s economy is such a successful performance as claimed, how come thousands of Rwandans still cry famine while hundreds of thousands of others ended up fleeing to Uganda in search of food and arable lands to cultivate without restrictions.

Below are some of the important highlights to tell the real story of Rwanda’s economy:

Low GDP

Rwanda has got a GDP per capita of USD 1,660 at purchasing power parity (PPP) and gross domestic product of USD 7.8 Billion which is lower than some post conflict countries such as Afghanistan, Sierra Leone and Haiti. Only 16

countries in the world have got a lower GDP per capita. Only two countries in the Great Lakes Region of Africa Burundi and the Democratic Republic of Congo have lower GDPs than Rwanda. Of course, the GDP index alone is not sufficient to obtain the whole picture of a given economy but it nonetheless portrays the most important performance features of the economy.⁷As such, the GDP of the Rwandan economy is a good indicator of how its economy performs as a whole.

High unemployment

Rwanda's population is around 12 million of which 56 % constitutes the active productive population aged between fifteen and sixty four years old. The total number of employed people in the Rwanda's formal economy stands at 157,827 as provided by establishment census of 2014⁸. Half of those jobs are concentrated in the urban Kigali City which is believed to contain 1.1 million people, while another half is scattered all

7 Himbara, D. (2016) Kagame economic mirage. South Carolina: Create Space Independent Publishing Platform

8 National Institute of Statistics of Rwanda.
"Establishment Census 2014".

over the county⁹. It is estimated that only 3% of the active population is employed in the country's formal economy.

Worse still, Rwanda has almost no formal productive economy of which the output meets the required standards to be traded at international level. The only current tradable economic output adds very little to the overall economy. 91% of Rwandans earn a living in service sectors that are overwhelmingly informal, concentrated in only three economic activities, namely 52,8% percent in wholesale, retail trade, repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles; 30% in accommodation and food-service activity and 8.5% of services activities including education, health and transportation (ibid).

The majority of business enterprises are tiny according to the 2014 census. The large chunk of business enterprises in Rwanda fall under the category of either micro (90.1%) or small 8.7% totalling 98.8%, whereas larger corporations which employ a hundred or more workers make up 0.2 %. This has had a bearing on tax collection according to Rwanda Authority data 2013

9 ibid

which shows that 0.3 % of all tax payers was responsible for 63,6% percent of tax collection¹⁰.

The 0.3 % represent 354 of 113,198 of taxpayers in the whole country and is considered as large paying category which is defined as an establishment or an individual with an annual turnover of USD1.4million. Ironically, unlike the Rwandan government, Kenya, a country that considers large taxpayers as an establishment or an individual with a turnover of 7.2 million USD dollars has publicly admitted the existence of a famine affecting some part of the country and asked the international Community for assistance accordingly..

Dependency on foreign Aid.

Rwanda still depends on foreign aid to run its public spending. To brand an image of a robust economic powerhouse, Rwanda may tend to downplay the input of foreign aid into its public budget needs. As such, although by 2016 Rwanda's total public spending relied on external financing up to 60% of the total budget, the

10 Rwanda Revenue Authority Annual Activity Report for 2012/2013. http://www.old.rra.gov.rw/IMG/pdf/Rra_Annual_report_2012-2013.pdf

Rwandan Government published a weaker aid dependency profile to the public audience. This is consistent with the political agenda to brand the country as a reliable and attractive investment hub.

Therefore, we maintain that Rwanda's dependency on foreign aid is unprecedented. However, such aid is vital because Rwanda is a poor country. According to the World Bank (2016)¹¹ 63% of Rwandans are poor. Rwanda has the highest Aid per capita in the region. It received USD 10 billion in official aid between 1994 and 2013. This annual aid has increased from USD 321 million in 2000 to USD 1 billion in 2010. The highest amount in a single year was USD 1,2 billion in 2011 before falling to USD 878 million in 2012 due to aid suspension as a result of Rwanda's sponsorship of militias in the Democratic Republic of Congo. In 2013 and 2014 it rose once again to slightly over USD 1 billion.

However, there has been some general criticisms about aid dependency which affect domestic governance, such as accountability, state expenditure and corruption as well as volatility. To

11“ Poverty Rates at International Poverty Lines” Word Bank, <http://wdi.worldbank.org/table/2.8>.

alleviate this, aid agencies and the donor community on a whole require as a prerequisite the establishment of strong good governance and accountability mechanisms to ensure the aid disbursed is effective and serves to impact the sectors for which they are released.

Accountability: Stephen Crack (2004)¹², stresses that if donors provide majority of public finances through aid, recipient governments are accountable to those external agencies, therefore it may not be possible to expect a credible social contract to develop between the government and its citizens; perhaps because it still easier for those countries to manage donors demand than managing the political process of building or improving domestic revenue collection. Aid may consequently undercut its original intent of promoting accountability, participation and ownership.

That is exactly what has happened in Rwanda. For Rwanda, it's difficult to assess whether the state is accountable of funding it receives for sectorial public spending. Any existing democratic governance structures seem to have no powers

12 Knack, S. (2001) Aid Dependence and the Quality of Governance: Cross-Country Empirical Tests. Southern Economic Journal, 68(2), pp. 310-329.

to effectively and efficiently control the government operations. Worse enough, the Rwandan Government operates as a police state which may always uses its forces to deter and terrorize whoever may be tempted to mingle into the Government affairs.

State expenditure and corruption: A number of observers have examined the impact of the large aid volume on expenditure and the overall spending and concluded that aid results in excessive and unsustainable spending that lead to macro – imbalance. The higher macro aid of course may negatively affect institutions in various ways such as the potential loss of competitiveness that results in lower exports and slow economic growth, fewer jobs, and increased dependency on external assistance (Booth 2011).¹³

If in a country, the political system is sustained by clientelist relationship and the power means access to states' privileges, aid becomes more desirable for the political management of economic crises. Therefore, states that find it difficult to pay their civil servants are more likely to politicise aid

13 Booth, D (2011) Aid, Institutions and Governance: What Have We Learned? Development Policy Review, 29(S1), pp.S5-S26

funded workshops, scholarships to study abroad, and other types of bribes which in the end turn aid into government consumption rather than public investment (Vand de Walle 2001)¹⁴

Aid volatility: Booth (2011)¹⁵ found that aid is more volatile than domestic fiscal revenues and that volatility lessens any potential positive benefits of aid on recipients. Aid often leads to poor budgeting and underestimation of revenues particularly since aid commitments tend to overestimate actual disbursement.

The fiscal uncertainty of dependency on external assistance makes long –term planning extremely difficult. Therefore, it may undermine the government priorities and policies.

4. Extortion of the population

In Rwanda you find government practices that have been designed to solely contribute to

14 Van de Walle, N. (2005) Overcoming Stagnation in Aid-Dependent Countries. Washington, DC: Center for Global Development.

15 Booth, D (2011) Aid, Institutions and Governance: What Have We Learned? Development Policy Review, 29(S1), pp.S5-S26.

impoverishing Rwandans. Instead of supporting and helping populations reduce poverty or invest for improved livelihoods, there are instead schemes that systematically seek to extort money and assets from them.

The organizational structure of these schemes is set at the grassroots level. The local administrative level is involved so that the state can ensure that each community member forcibly participates in monetary contribution to those schemes on a regular basis. The most popular schemes are:

Agaciro funds: A UN report accused Rwanda of fuelling a conflict in neighbouring Democratic Republic of Congo by supporting and arming an armed rebellion. Many European countries and international institutions suspended their financial support to the Rwandan government budget as a result.

In August 2012, the Rwandan government reacted by creating Agaciro Development Fund¹⁶ in order to” *contribute to different development projects that would have otherwise been supported by terminated*

16 <http://www.agaciro.rw/index.php?id=2>

financial support in the process of increasing financial autonomy of Rwanda’

The issue with this fund is that any community member is forced to regularly pour some minimum fixed amounts into that basket, regardless of the economic power of the contributor. Poor families have been forced to sell their lands, livestock and even their houses in order to contribute to this fund. Most businesses have also been ordered to commit substantial sums while those paying less and the renegades had to face severe punishments. As result, small businesses ended up closing shop, mostly because Agaciro Funds unaccounted expenditure bills were unaffordable.

There are cases in some public services such as hospitals and local authorities where successful entrepreneurs may be required to provide proof of contribution to Agaciro Funds as a condition for receiving service. Individuals have also been arrested and imprisoned as result of failure to contribute to that fund or failure to provide proof of their contribution.

Ishema ryacu fund: ‘Our national, our pride’
This fund was established in June 2015 as result

of the arrest of former Rwandan chief spy General Karenzi Karake in London on an international arrest warrant issued by Spain. This fund aimed to cover the USD 1 Million of conditional bail granted to him¹⁷.

Between June and August 2015 across the country, individuals and businesses were forced to contribute to this fund as a way of demonstrating their patriotism. When General Karake was eventually released and got back his bail money, none of the contributors were reimbursed. According to a local newspaper¹⁸; more contributions were requested from the population in order ‘to be ready in a case a similar problem arise in the future’

The Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) political party contribution: also known as “*Umusanzu w’icyama*”. This fund is collected from the population and businesses by local Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) party officials. Contributing to this fund is not officially compulsory, but in

¹⁷ <http://www.newtimes.co.rw/section/article/2015-07-07/190387/>

¹⁸ <http://www.kigalitoday.com/amakuru/mu-rwanda/Hatangijwe-ikigega-Ishema-ryacu-Fund-kigamije-kugoboka-Abanyarwanda-bahuye-n>

practice officials go door to door collecting this money from people.

Contributing to this fund is considered as a sign of gratitude to the RPF for *'having ended the genocide, saved the country and providing security'*. Regardless of their financial situation, people actively contribute to that fund to avoid being labelled enemy of the State.

Local night guards (also known as abanyerondo) fund: This fund is collected by local authorities or local nominated community leaders. The money collected are used to cover expenses and sometimes to pay members of the local community that have volunteered their time in patrolling their neighbourhoods during night time to ensure local security.

C

WHY IS THE WORLD NOT AWARE OF THIS FAMINE?

1. Lack of freedom of speech

Freedom of speech is a fundamental right in any democracy. The Rwandan constitution stipulates that freedom of the press and freedom of information are recognized and guaranteed by the State.

Political and civil rights give people the opportunity to draw attention forcefully to general needs and to demand appropriate public action according to Amartya Sen (1999). The response of a government to the acute suffering of its people often depends on the pressure that is put on it. The exercise of political rights (such as voting, criticizing, protesting, and the like) can make a real difference to the political incentives that operate on a government.

In the terrible history of famines in the world as suggested by Amartya Sen (1999)¹⁹, no substantial famine has ever occurred in any independent and democratic country with a relatively free press. We cannot find exceptions to this rule, no matter where we look: the famines of Ethiopia, Somalia, or other dictatorial regimes; famines in the Soviet Union in the 1930s; China's 1958-61 famine with the failure of the Great Leap Forward; or earlier still, the famines in Ireland or India under alien rule.

China, although it was in many ways doing much better economically than India, still managed (unlike India) to have a famine, indeed the largest recorded famine in world history: Nearly 30 million people died in the famine of 1958-61, while faulty governmental policies remained uncorrected for three full years. The policies went uncriticised because there were no opposition parties in parliament, no free press, and no multiparty elections. Indeed, it is precisely this lack of challenge that allowed the deeply defective policies to continue even though they were killing millions each year. The same can be

19 Amartya Sen (1999) Democracy as a Universal Value. *Journal of Democracy* 10 (3) pp 3-17

said about the contemporary famine occurring in Rwanda.

Famines are often associated with what looks like natural disasters, and commentators often settle for the simplicity of explaining famines by pointing to events such as: the floods in China during the failed Great Leap Forward, the droughts and crop failures in Ethiopia and Rwanda. Nonetheless, many countries with similar natural problems or even worse manage perfectly well because a responsive government intervenes to help alleviate hunger including seeking help from the International community. Even the poorest democratic countries that have faced terrible droughts or floods or other natural disasters (such as India in 1973, or Zimbabwe and Botswana in the early 1980s) have been able to feed their people without experiencing a famine (Amartya Sen 1983)²⁰.

However, it is not the case in Rwanda, simply because the government is known to undermine the political and civil rights by accumulating power through elimination of potential competition, intimidation of the population

20 Amartya Sen (1983) Development: Which Way Now?" Economic Journal 93.

by security forces, forcibly killing or jailing journalists who criticize the government. The Rwandan government also has the reputation to inflate economic development and to use propaganda to exaggerate social economic conditions²¹ (including the near absence of unemployment). Therefore, the Rwandan authorities have refused to declare a state of emergency in the worst affected regions where famine has killed hundreds and forced thousands to seek refuge in neighbouring countries, particularly in Uganda.

Rwanda has deliberately refused to acknowledge the famine. Due to its control of the press and public freedom of expression, the International community is not fully aware of the extent of the current famine.

2. Extensive positive image promotion

The Rwandan government has worked hard to promote a positive image internationally. UK and US based Public relations firms have been

21 Himbara, D.(2016) Kagame economic mirage. South Carolina: Create Space Independent Publishing Platform

hired to help Rwanda to beautify its profile and reputation at the international scene²².

Those firms' roles include "highlighting President Kagame and his visionary leadership" and "The Rwandan Miracle: Healing of a Nation"²³. As a result, the president of Rwanda has been invited to speak at Harvard²⁴ on international development by sharing his success story.

The story of a ravaging famine would not fit with the positive image that the Rwandan government is striving to sustain by spending more than \$50,000 per month on self-promotion, while the income of the average Rwandan is less than \$1000 per year.

22 <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/world/how-a-us-agency-cleaned-up-rwandas-genocide-stained-image/article542612/>

23 <https://www.fara.gov/docs/6055-Exhibit-AB-20110812-1.pdf#page=17>

24 <https://college.harvard.edu/college-events/conversation-his-excellency-paul-kagame>

D

CONCLUSION

Our report has demonstrated a clear picture, causes and consequences of the hidden famine in Rwanda that is affecting millions of Rwandans and thousands leaving the country in search for food. The famine phenomenon in Rwanda is so real and outrageous that Rwandans found a moniker best suited to describe it: Nzaramba, literally meaning “I shall live long”.

It is important that the Rwandan government cease to ignore this problem and take its responsibilities by undertaking all steps necessary that would alleviate suffering of victims of Nzaramba.

The international community should put pressure on the Rwandan government to allow them to fully access all affected areas in order to assess the needs and provide all required support.

E

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Short term:**

- ❖ International community should intervene in Rwanda and provide immediate food assistance.
- ❖ The Rwandan government should allow the International Community to establish the exact number of people and regions affected by the famine.
- ❖ Organise an international appeal for funding that will be used to address this urgent famine situation.
- ❖ Neighbouring countries, particularly the Ugandan government should provide humanitarian assistance to Rwandans fleeing the famine crisis.
- ❖ The Rwandan government should unconditionally allow the international humanitarian and aid agencies to

intervene freely in investigating and addressing the famine crisis identified.

- ❖ The Rwanda government should be willing to provide the necessary support and assistance to those agencies in their intervention.

- **Long term:**

- ❖ The Rwandan government should undertake steps to open political space and allow freedom expression and media.
- ❖ The Rwandan government should undertake steps to review the current agricultural policies.
- ❖ The Rwandan government should undertake steps to put in place robust mechanisms and procedures that would effectively collect accurate social, economic and health data on the well-being of population in order to inform policy making and service delivery.

GLOBAL CAMPAIGN FOR RWANDANS HUMAN RIGHTS