International Alert.

Words That Kill

Rumours, Prejudice, Stereotypes and Myths Amongst
the People of the Great lakes Region of Africa

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About International Alert

International Alert is an independent peacebuilding organisation that has worked for over 20 years to lay the foundations for lasting peace and security in communities affected by violent conflict.

Our multifaceted approach focuses both in and across various regions; aiming to shape policies and practices that affect peacebuilding; and helping build skills and capacity through training. Our regional work is based in the African Great Lakes, West Africa, the South Caucasus, Nepal, Sri Lanka, the Philippines and Colombia.

Our thematic projects work at local, regional and international levels, focusing on cross-cutting issues critical to building sustainable peace. These include business and economy, gender, governance, aid, security and justice.

We are one of the world's leading peacebuilding NGOs with an estimated income of £8.4 million in 2008 and more than 120 staff based in London and our 11 field offices.
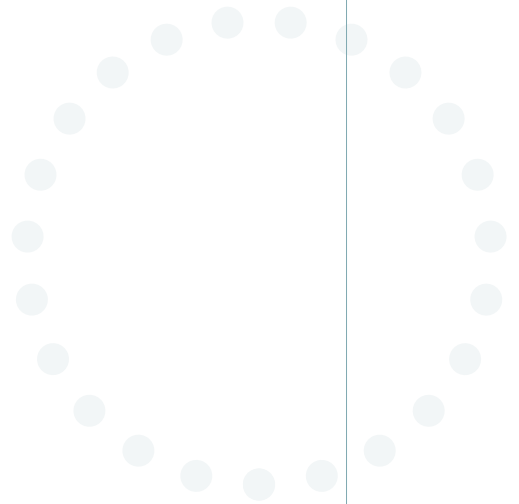
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Rumours, Myths, Prejudices and Stereotypes

RAN and International Alert are pleased to present this inaugural publication entitled Words That Kill

RAN, the Regional Analysts Network in the Great Lakes Region of Africa, is a joint initiative of independent analysts from Burundi, the DRC and Rwanda. The analysts have joined hands to share insights gained from their own original research on selected topics relating to the issue of conflict.

Since 1998, International Alert's Great Lakes Programme has done pioneering work in peacebuilding from a regional perspective. Realising that conflict in the Great Lakes Region has an inescapably regional dimension, International Alert supports this network of independent analysts in and from the region to carry out studies and publish their findings within the framework of RAN.

RAN's vision is one of home-grown and independent regional expertise engaged for peace and development in the Great Lakes Region. It is RAN's purpose to enhance regional expertise through the production of objective analyses on conflict related issues, which are then shared with actors in the public domain, civil society and the societies of the region at large. RAN's first project opens the door to many possibilities for strengthening processes and institutions in this troubled region

This first edition from RAN addresses from various perspectives the question of how Rumours, Myths, Stereotypes and Prejudice affect conflict. The researchers consulted many ordinary citizens as well as policy makers and opinion leaders. The research has captured information that is not widely documented, if at all. The very originality of the findings provides fresh and exciting views, which will be of interest to many. The joint recommendations produced are of a concrete and practical nature and will be useful to policy makers both within and outside the region in addressing the issues around conflict in this complex region.

International Alert congratulates RAN on this commendable volume. We invite governments, national leaders, regional blocs, religious leaders, academics and all those whose input impacts upon policy for and within the region, to make good use of its findings and recommendations.

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Introduction

Much of the violent conflict in Burundi, Rwanda and the Kivu provinces of Congo over the past fifty years has been because of discrimination—and political, social and economic exclusion. In the worst cases the extreme intolerance of people of a different ethnic identity has taken the form of massacres and genocide.

When this happens, people are being excluded or killed not for what rights or wrongs they have done—nor for what they believe, or even for what they have—but for their identity: for what they are, how they identify themselves and are identified by others.

A few years ago, a respected research institute in the Great Lakes region organised a small regional conference in Bujumbura on the subject of the "identités meurtrières" — the "deadly identities" —that characterise the region. A year or so later, a small group of distinguished analysts from different academic disciplines began to meet periodically to share understandings and perspectives from the three core countries of the region. Two years ago, they decided to carry out some initial research on "Rumours, myths, prejudice and stereotypes in the Great Lakes region". The group has taken the name 'Regional Analysts Network' or RAN.

This is the first RAN report. It brings together the findings of that initial research carried out in Burundi, Rwanda and South Kivu. The authors are expert academics in the fields of social anthropology, political science and law. The research has begun to look at some of the social forces and processes that create and perpetuate discrimination and exclusion. It takes an initial look at the myths that give rise to stereotypes, and the influence these have on embedding prejudice in the views that people have of others who are outside their group. Some of the raw research material documents the transmission of prejudice through the medium of rumours. In other contexts and in other times this would be described as psychological warfare.

This dimension of conflict in the Great Lakes region requires further study, but it also requires sustained attention and action particularly from the main communicators in the different countries. The negative media and the negative messages that misinform, distort and manipulate with murderous consequences can only be effectively countered through

education and more responsible leadership in unbiased communication. We hope teachers, journalists, politicians and community leaders, church leaders, civil servants, business people and advertisers, and NGOs and civil society leaders will take up this challenge.

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Synthesis of the Study on Rumours, Stereotypes, and Prejudice Between the People of Burundi, Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of Congo

Prepared by: Dr. Christophe SEBUDANDI

I. Objectives and Methodology

I.1. Objectives

As early as 2005, International Alert and an informal group of researchers from Burundi, Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), known as the Network of Regional Analysts (*Réseau d'Analystes Régionaux,* RAN), decided embark upon the first in a series of identified studies having as their common denominator a regional scale and interest.

This pioneering study was chosen because of its importance for peace building in the sub-region, known for its national conflicts, which have boiled over into two large regional conflicts centred on the Democratic Republic of Congo. The sheer number of deaths and misfortunes from this war stirred up the profound resentment, violence and hatred, apparent in these rumours, prejudice and stereotypes. Sayings, legends, prejudices and myths produced by centuries of interaction between the peoples of the sub-region, were rekindled, resuscitated, transformed and used as weapons in the call to arms and in war.

The study has a three-tier objective, namely to:

i)   Carry out an inventory of the suspicions and their manifestations, particularly in rumours, prejudices, stereotypes and historical myths, and single out the original and proximate causes as well as their consequences on the populations of

Burundi, Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of Congo in terms of their national and sub regional identities;

ii) Explore ways and means of bringing about a level of confidence conducive to promoting cooperation and sustainable development between the peoples, particularly through a rethink on the styles of communication conducive to promoting peaceful behaviour, that will not prejudice the building of confidence and peace in these countries and peace in the sub-region;

iii) Recommend techniques and strategies to promote a halt or reduction in the spread of rumours and the limiting of the effects on target populations.

In addition to a comparative approach to relations, studies on Burundi and the Democratic Republic of Congo have examined the state of relations between the ethnic communities of Burundi and Kivu. In Rwanda, the study focused solely on the relationship between Rwandans and Congolese.

I.2. Methodological Approach

As a whole, the three studies needed to have identical methodology in order to guarantee comparable results. However due to the context and specific constraints of each area of study, the approaches had to slightly modified.

Once the survey sites and the sample batches had been defined, generally speaking, the three studies followed a qualitative approach based on a questionnaire administered in either a direct or an indirect manner. For the DRC, open interviews were conducted in order to analyse and interpret the reaction to surveys on subjects that were sensitive. Due to the sensitive nature of the topics in question, in Rwanda the organisation of the focus groups was postponed in order to guarantee maximum secrecy and confidentiality in the interest of the surveys and research. In Burundi, however, the focus groups were organized without a problem.

Sample batches were determined so that perceptions of one another could be examined by crossing viewpoints. In Burundi just as in Rwanda, the study focused on areas characterized by the presence of survey subjects and prolonged interaction between the communities in question. In Rwanda, this concerns the Congolese and Rwandan communities located in border areas (Gisenyi, Cyangungu), on the university campuses (Butare, Free University of Kigali and Gisenyi), and due to the existence of a significant Congolese community there. For Burundi the choice made was based on similar criteria. Six provinces in the country were chosen: Bururi, Bujumbura (the capital), Cibitoke, Gitega, Kirundo and Muyinga—all based on their geographical position, with the exception of Gitega, which was studied to see what impact distance would have. For the DRC, the study area was the mountainous Kivu district.

In the three areas of study, the sample batch included both male and female adults and all professional and social categories. In Burundi, 61 in-depth interviews were carried out; 56 focus groups comprising 6 to 12 people were also utilised. In Rwanda, a total of 304 people were interviewed while, in Kivu in the DRC, 220 people were interviewed.

II Definition of concepts used

Occasionally the concepts to be used were defined by the persons under study themselves, in order to measure their level of understanding of the representations used. Sometimes there was some misunderstanding because of the complexity or familiarity, particularly the notion of myths, which seemed the most difficult to define. Moreover, concepts such as prejudice and stereotypes proved to be difficult to translate into local languages, therefore difficult to understand for non French-speaking populations.

II.1. Rumours

Reflections on the nature of rumour date back to 1902 with Louis William Stern's work on his investigation into childhood. However, rumour as a phenomenon, predates this. Stern was also interested in the psychology behind the evidence, and especially the central notion of 'details', a decisive factor in a judicial inquiry. Stern developed an experimental protocol that he called 'the experimental rumour'. This became symbolic of the way rumours operate: A trivial event is passed through a chain of people who pass it on from one to the other. After being relayed four times, the trivial event is reduced from 149 details to 42. Therefore a levelling occurs due to a loss of information. It becomes more concise, the remaining details are exaggerated, and there is assimilation through reorganisation around the main items or stereotypes.

In 1911, rumour theory was re-launched when Rosa Oppenheim studied why people rarely believe or heed a denial. She concluded that *rumour is stronger than truth.* In psychoanalysis, Carl Jung's work stated that *rumour appears like a collective fantasy.* During the Second World War, the work of Gordon Allport and Leo Postman shed new light on the study of rumour. According to them, rumour is a suggestion linked to the day's events, intended to be believed, peddled from person to person, usually by word of mouth, without any concrete data available to prove if it is exact or not. They offer a formula according to which the spread of the rumour is dependent on its ambiguous nature[1]. In everyday language, rumours spread like noise moving; a piece of news that is spread in public, but neither the origin nor its truth can be ascertained (Robert Quotidien, 1996). The rumour's credibility is dependent on, and proportional to, the person spreading the rumour. In other words it depends on their skill, reliability, objectiveness, energy and the attractive nature of their personality. The choice of relay is therefore a determining factor for transmission.

The social impact of rumours varies a great deal. Related to the collective unconsciousness, rumours are a manifestation of wishes and an exorcism for anxiety. From an anthropological viewpoint, rumours seem to be a relatively independent process revelatory of the strategies employed by social players for power issues.

II.2. Prejudice, Stereotypes and Myths

Prejudice is a preconceived opinion dictated by social background, the period and education, or a ready-made idea[2]. Prejudice is an axiologically neutral term except for

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[1] Allport, G. W. & Postman, L. J., (1947) 1965. The Psychology of Rumor, New York, Russell & Russel.

the fact that it denotes a lack of strict control of its content. According to G. Lindzey *et al.,* prejudice is an unfounded belief, usually concerning a racial, ethnic or social group. It is a complete attitude, an evaluative response to others, based on what we think of them. Prejudice implies a good or bad judgement value on something that plunges into stereotypes as standard perception on what someone is or thinks; often it is applied to groups as a whole. Prejudice and stereotypes are important in contributing to the creation of scapegoats[3].

Stereotypes appear as rigid attitudes or rough templates that are used either to attribute favourable or unfavourable characteristics, ultimately even to entirely characterise a certain category of persons. Certain words are sufficient to evoke these patterns—for example the Jews, blacks, Americans, women, etc. In essence, a stereotype is an idea or a popular cliché that is held of a person or group based on over-simplified misuse of actual or imagined character traits. Stereotypes may either be positive or negative[4].

In the case of the myth concept, it's anthropological sense designates an anonymous account of gods, heroes, ancestors and supernatural beings that aim to explain in a vivid way the reasons behind phenomena and especially provide answers to questions on the origin and destiny of man. In general, myths are considered as narrative texts by unknown authors, often placed in the beginning of time, from which fundamental events have sprung.

III. Summary of the rumours, prejudice, stereotypes and myths

III.1 Dominating tendency, gloomy rumours

All three studies conducted simultaneously in Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Rwanda showed a high level of mistrust between the various ethnic communities and nationalities in the sub-region. It is blatantly clear that rumours flourish in times of crisis, war or increased tension, especially during election campaigns—situations that all three countries have experienced and especially in the case of war between the countries. In all of these circumstances, the rumours have been gloomy. Rumours are all the more believable when they are frightening, stir up anxiety or announce impending disaster.

An analysis of the rumours on relations between ethnic communities in Burundi reveals the level of suspicion between Tutsis and Hutus. The most widespread and persistent rumours concern the Tutsi genocide; attacks and slaughter between ethnic groups (between the Hutu and the Tutsi); coups d'état; targeted assassinations and bewitchment.[5] A typical rumour is that of the poisoned stamp, quite a characteristic rumour, which first appeared during the election campaign in the 60s and again reappeared in the 2005 elections—although, by then, the poisoned stamp had become a poisoned syringe— the macabre objective being, to reduce the number of Hutus down to the same number of Tutsis. Raising an alarm against a presumed syringe holder was sufficient to have him quickly liquidated. There have been several victims of this rumour.

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2 Robert Canadien, 1996: 1497-1498, cited by Déo Mbonyinkebe in *"Rwandais et Congolais ente méfiance et espoirs de cohabitation pacifique"* [Rumours, prejudice, stereotypes and myths], Kigali, 2007.
3 ibidem
4 See http:// www.media-awareness.ca visited 12 September 2006.
5 These were some of the most widespread rumours at the time of the survey in September 2006.

Between Kivu ethnic groups, rumours have highlighted a particular and reciprocal aversion between the so-called 'autochthon' native to the region and those from elsewhere in the Tutsi Banyamulenge populations.

The two regional Congo wars, the alliances and counter-alliances that have been formed in the last decade have contributed strongly to the spread of rumours in each country. It is impossible to talk about the relationship between Burundians or Rwandans alone, or Burundians and Congolese, or even Rwandan and Congolese, without referring to a third or fourth party as well. The role of Uganda is frequently evoked. The myth surrounding the Hima Empire and that of its opposite extreme, built around alliances between Hutu forces to overtake power in all the countries in the sub-region are omnipresent in rumours spread in all three countries. Above all, Rwanda is constantly accused of expansionist designs on the DRC or even Burundi. Burundi and Uganda have also been implicated but to a lesser extent. According to these rumours, any means is acceptable to attain these goals, even recourse to 'germ warfare' through the intermediary of the military, who are either Ugandan, Rwandan, recruited to inoculate the Congolese with the AIDS virus. Their ghoulish plot would be to exterminate the Bantu in this war, which has for a long time opposed the Nilo-Hamites (Tutsi or Hima) in the sub-region.

A recurrent feature is the appearance of rumours of anxiety, announcing impending disasters used to mobilise and galvanise victims into defending themselves and not letting themselves be pushed around. Rumours circulating among the Congolese populations of Kivu, Burundi and Rwanda describe the fear of a renewed invasion of their country by Eastern neighbours. In particular the 'Tutsi International Power' plot is repeatedly trotted out in an invigorated version through intermediaries such as Jean Baptiste Bagaza, Laurent Nkunda or Paul Kagame. The latter is attributed to have magical powers. In one rumour it is said that during the 2002 eruption of the Nyiragongo volcano he used his hands to direct the lava flow to the Congolese side. However these evil powers may cover other fields as well. The common factor in all these rumours is the demonisation of the Congo Tutsis, shown to be invaders, looters and traitors. According to rumour, the legendary hospitality of the Congolese has been betrayed. Their guests, who have stolen their land and plundered their mineral deposits, have exploited them.

III.2 Prejudice and stereotypes are above all demeaning and negative

In similar fashion to rumours, negative traits dominate the prejudice and stereotypes to be found in ethnic relations among the three populations of the region. They are generally demeaning towards the targeted subjects with very few exceptions. Ethnic proximity in the three countries generates solidarity and may occasionally lead to a convergence in this prejudice.

Stereotypes and prejudice between Burundians are noteworthy for their high level of suspicion. They follow the ethnic and regional divide. The attitude of Tutsis largely reflects a lack of respect towards Hutus, notably citing their greed and accusing them of lacking intelligence, delicacy, discretion and reserve. Hutu prejudice towards Tutsis is just as bleak. They are said to be cunning, ungrateful and dangerous. They are often described as snakes or bees. There's not one you can rely on. Both sides lay claim to

rather prestigious and positive characteristics for themselves. Between the populations of the three countries, most of the prejudice and stereotypes are packed with suspicion and animosity. Running from the anodyne to quite serious charges in terms of self-image[6].

Generally speaking, however, prejudice and stereotyping between Kivu ethnic communities, excluding the Banyamulenge, are not heavily loaded with hatred. They are linked to the ways of life (living conditions, food, diet etc.) and interaction between the given groups. Most of the people interviewed in Rwanda and Burundi cited almost identical prejudice and stereotypes concerning the Congolese. They are frequently referred to as crooks, fraudsters, forgers, liars, and cheats who like the good things in life. They are known as strange people, not very hard working and naive. They can be fickle, not very reliable, boastful, loud, quick-tempered and chatterboxes. As far as relationships go, the Congolese have a reputation for being unable to keep a secret and being vulgar. A few positive qualities are nevertheless attributed to the Congolese, namely that they are open-minded, easy to get along with and resourceful.

In similar fashion some prejudice and stereotyping highlighted in surveys conducted with Burundians converge with the views held by the Congolese regarding Rwandans. They are negative and demeaning. They say Rwandans are pretentious, have inflated views of their own intelligence, are haughty and disdainful, bitter, easily irritated, loud, argumentative, like to show off and are quick-tempered. Lastly they are said to be nasty, unscrupulous, greedy and dishonest in business. Ungrateful, calculating, and profiteering can also be thrown in for good measure. The Congolese interviewed considered them bloodthirsty and genocidal. A few stereotypes paint them in a good light—they are recognised for their solidarity, elegance, appreciation of culture and work, and their courage and bravery in war.

Even if those interviewed may have tempered their opinions since they all live in Burundi, Rwandan prejudice against Burundians isn't tender either. Rwandans say the Burundians are unintelligent, fickle and nasty, distrustful of Rwandans and selfish. Some Rwandan adages and proverbs about Burundians point to their ungratefulness and advocate caution in dealing with them.

Studies have shown that myths serve as ideological reservoirs to feed fears and anxiety. They are resuscitated and updated, then used to interpret and explain the attitude and behaviour of the adversary. Overall, the origination and spreading of rumours, prejudice, and stereotypes, and rekindling of myths are attributed to political situations and politicians.   It is therefore essential to implement methods to prevent, manage and reduce rumours, prejudice and stereotypes.

In this respect, it is recommended to foster conditions of peace and security, with the promotion of good government at all levels, whether local, national or sub regional. The fight against rumours, prejudice and stereotypes must be underscored by a stable sub regional environment, which allows the free circulation of goods and people. In this context, a framework for exchange between the countries should be implemented (the CEPGL is mentioned), to fully address the unresolved issues and promote recon-ciliation between the countries. Other exchange programmes should be put in place, notably for the youth, religious groups, and businesspeople to promote cooperation and mutual knowledge between citizens of the three countries in the sub-region.

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[6] See Mbonyinkebe D., op.cit.

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4

Intercommunity Rumours, Stereotypes and Suspicion in South Kivu

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Introduction

Throughout time and space, human beings have contributed to the civilisation of humanity by calling on man's creative vitality, inspiration, genius and multitude of talents. Our society, with its essentially oral traditions has a good sprinkling of both psychological and sociological illustrations derived from this oral faculty. Stereotypes, proverbs, maxims, fairy tales, adages, songs, curses, anthroponyms and place names are just some of its manifestations. They have been invented to provide information, to amuse, to provide release or goad. In general, these expressions have socio-emotionally loaded content that sooner or later must be shared with others.

Since the content is open to everyone, just like the air we breathe, there is the mistaken tendency to trivialise and consider these expressions to be the privilege of the less educated layers of the population. However, as with other psycho-social phenomena, it is worth conducting a deeper investigation especially since these expressions convey and reflect past experiences, marked by latent or glaring conflicts, disturbing frustrations, subconscious hostilities, justified or unjustified teasing, and so on.

The topic we intend to investigate is therefore pertinent. In fact the problem we face is to, on the one hand, try and understand why ethnic communities use such practices on one another, investigate the background, motivation and ensuing consequences of the use of these practices on peaceful intercommunity co-existence in South Kivu.

It is our belief that rumours, stereotypes and other forms of stigmatisation are, as far as communication and social psychology are concerned, proof of community dynamics and vitality in the face of socio-cultural differences. Yet, they are also vectors of conflict capable of inciting tension, friction and confrontation between communities.

The title of this study caused us to take an interest in various types of material that could reveal the hidden motives for intercommunity suspicion in Kivu. This notably concerns rumours spread through pamphlets and gossip, proverbs and maxims, myths, epic tales and legends. The material was used in turn as support for the study of rumours, stereotypes, prejudice and myths.

The structure of this study was articulated around three key points. Firstly, a theoretical framework to explain the concepts and a reminder of the theories in relation to the object of this study, followed by a methodology for the collection of data, ending with the analysis of the data and conclusions.

I. Initial Questions

1. What spatio-temporal factors and background favour the fabrication and spreading of rumours? Beyond its informative function, does the rumour hold another function within Kivu society?

2. What impact does the spread of rumours through pamphlets and gossip have on peaceful co-existence and peace?

3. Moreover, what explanation can be provided for the continued negative perceptions that the communities have of one another?

4. Incidentally, does the cultural substratum such as epic tales, myths and legends contain elements capable of influencing, either positively or negatively, the intercommunity coexistence in the mountainous area of Kivu?

This study will attempt to answer these four key questions.

II. Hypothesis

a) Irrespective of the media used to convey them, rumours are often perceived as recurrent and permanent, the product of a particular spatio-temporal context. In order to understand the rumour's rationale, the economic and socio-political issues at stake must be taken into account in research that aims to collect, analyse and handle rumours.

b) The rumour's line of thinking pretends to be not only the truth but also the revelation of the truth. It may be an individual creation or anonymous, but it will eventually succeed in piercing the collective imagination that will give credit to its pretension of truth. It is manifest that criticism must be removed or at least paralysed so that one is rapidly persuaded that the truth lies with the authorities and the majority.

c) Word of mouth, which used to spread rumours has been substantially strengthened by modern media such as the written press, audiovisual and Internet technology and telephones.

d) Rumour is not the exclusive domain of countries with an oral tradition or a totalitarian regime that muzzles the press. Rumour does not only come about to fill the gap in information brought about by single party government or cash hungry media, although both are contributory factors. Rumours offer another point of view to the line bandied by official media of both totalitarian regimes and old democracies. Its preferred medium is the pamphlet, a particularly efficient means of communication during times of crisis.

e) Besides rumours, stereotypes and other forms of stigmatisation constitute vectors for conflict, capable of fostering tension, friction or confrontation between communities. These stereotypes and prejudices are rooted in myths, epic tales and legends that contain elements capable of arousing intercommunity suspicion.

f) The absence of open intercommunity communication is the main factor in propagating intercommunity suspicion. Cultural reconciliation would enable members of the various communities to communicate thereby removing the barriers and walls of suspicion.

III. Spatio-Temporal Scope of the Study

Our study concerns rumours, stereotypes and intercommunity suspicion in the mountainous area of Kivu. We retraced the political history of the Congo back to 1960 in order to fully understand the political and economic issues at stake then and now, which not only anchor but also mould and spread rumours and stereotypes. Key periods have been targeted, mainly due to the conflictual and contentious historical events that characterise them. Depending on the issues at stake at the time, rumours and stereotypes may be recurrent and long standing; however, they may also occasionally reflect a fleeting and short-lived political line that disappears without trace, forgotten, along with the issues that brought them forth.

As for the geographical limitation, this research remained focussed on rumours and stereotypes circulating in the mountainous region of Kivu. This choice is justified by the quantity of mutually suspicious discourse between communities that the Kivutians share with neighbouring communities in Rwanda, Uganda and Burundi. From an additional perspective, it would be difficult to analyse the rumours and stereotypes based on the political and ethnic issues at stake in Kivu without mention of Kinshasa, the institutional headquarters. We also took into consideration some rumours that spread from East to West through migration and which show how even the most ludicrous news will travel fast especially when its intent is to decide the political or economic fate of men in power and the fate of the masses on the lookout for a prophet-liberator.

IV. Data Collection

The collection of the research material was undertaken in several stages:

■ Collecting of pamphlets available in libraries and in private hands

■ Collecting and writing up the oral rumours in circulation between 1996 and 2006 and having explicit or implicit topics (the psychosis of war, intercommunity suspicion such as 'us against them')

■ Selecting rumours spread in gossip or other media that drive stereotypes, social clichés and intercommunity suspicion.

The study of stereotypes was first directed at the gathering and presentation of data, followed by the description of selected stereotypes and their context before finally noting the reaction of the communities primarily targeted by the stereotypes.

Several techniques were used to gather data. We used either open discussion with members from different tribal or ethnic groups, and also orientated or directed interviews, or questionnaires that had been prepared beforehand based on the research of existing documents.

V. Data Analysis

From the analysis of data gathered on rumours, stereotypes and prejudices in South Kivu, it became clear that they depended either on collective paranoia, attempts 'to restore a little-known truth', stigmatisation of the other or an attempt to explain the issues at stake in the repeated conflicts in the region. Material passed on, either orally or through the written word, was a vector for mistrust between communities, naturally feeding suspicion, conflicts and tension.

In the following sections we will reveal what we have learnt from the analysis of rumours, myths, legends and stereotypes by highlighting the most glaring examples. A fuller illustration will be available in a subsequent, lengthier document.

V. 1. Rumours

Whether in pamphlet form or by word of mouth, the rumours we identified can be broken down into the following topics:

Predictions of calamity together with paranoia or persecution complex

Given that the Democratic Republic for the Congo has known repeated wars, it is not surprising that prophets of impending doom are more numerous than leaders ready to point out to the ravaged population the ray of hope on the horizon. These prophecies generally point to reigning insecurity for people and their belongings, the psychosis of a heavy extermination of one ethnic group by another, etc. These prophecies aim to alert the community to the danger represented by the neighbour, the outsider etc.

Threat of biological war

Rumours circulate to the effect that the governments of Rwanda, Uganda and Burundi are ready to release thousands of battalions of HIV positive soldiers into DRC with the avowed intent of sparking an AIDS pandemic within the Congolese population. HIV becomes a weapon of war, more lethal than a Kalashnikov.

A Tutsi International Power plot and pan-Rwandan expansionist designs

Rwanda is always identified as a potential, current and permanent aggressor of the Greater Congo. According to rumours, Tutsis worldwide are networking, like the Jews under Zionism, to expand Rwandan borders and build a Hima/Tutsi empire in the Great Lakes Region. This is to be achieved by eating away the territory of neighbouring countries and by falsifying historical data.

Holocaust and targeted assassinations

The massacres carried out in Gatumba, Kasika, Katogota, Makobola, Kaniola, Ninja, Bunyakiri, Tingi-Tingi and many other places still fuel rumours. The widespread use of the term *'génocidaire'* or perpetrators of genocide, applied not only to a whole community but also to a complete nation, present and future generations included. Despite the fact that these massacres and assassinations were not all rumour, it remains the sole damning argument in this logic of stigmatising and demonising. The silence that cloaks these tragic, historical facts stokes persistent rumours that can be manipulated for other schemes depending on circumstances and opportunities. According to rumour, the perpetrators of this holocaust are high-ranking officials with their patrons in the DRC also implicated in assassinations targeting political and religious leaders in Kivu.

Attempts to restore a little-known historical truth

Most of the rumours, sometimes written in haste, seek to restore unknown or little-known historical truths. The author and the rumourmonger will set themselves up to redress not only falsified geopolitical history but also collective memory. The discourse will often be heavily wrapped in nationalist and patriotic sentiment.

Tribal-ethnic stigmatising and suspicion

Rumours come flying from all sides and are intended to discriminate against such and such a group, considered inferior, 'barbarian' or 'uncivilised' by one or more ethnic groups. By demonising 'the others who don't resemble us' this attitude spreads and crystallizes in collective mentalities from generation to generation even though it may be humorous or done for fun or popular emotional release. Pygmies, the Banyarwanda and affiliated groups are the butt of similar discrimination and demonisation.

International, regional and local dynamics

Tutsis in the Congo have always been taken for invaders or looters. According to rumours, the Rwandan Patriotic Front's war was entirely funded by expatriate Tutsis living in the DRC and elsewhere. The end always justifies the means for a Tutsi who wants to grow rich, either using guile or buying opinion through corruption and prostitution, as long as these strategies assure Tutsi rule and feed the rumours.

The issue of infiltration from Uganda, Rwanda and Burundi into the Democratic Republic of Congo is one that feeds rumours in the Great Lakes Region. Certain actors are therefore designated as facilitators of the aforesaid infiltrations. Frontier outposts in Kivu, Minembwe and others are said to be 'sensitive' because they are the points of departure for rebellions and attacks on the DRC. Trafficking in Congolese military uniforms is taken particularly seriously because Rwandan, Ugandan and Burundi soldiers use these army fatigues to disguise themselves as Congolese soldiers. The actors and

facilitators in these infiltrations are, if the rumours are to be believed, MONUC[7] and other charitable organisations working in the DRC. Even 'Bill Yates's International Alert' is said to be a facilitator for the massive infiltration of Rwandans, Burundians and Ugandans into the DRC. An invisible hand in the wings is continuously pulling the strings of the Congolese crisis. According to the author of this rumour, the owner of the invisible hand has been unearthed and traced to none other than the former US President, Bill Clinton. However Bill Clinton is not operating alone. He is in league with all the Westerners, who according to another rumour spend sleeplessness nights as soon as calm returns to the African continent and to the DRC in particular.

Poison psychosis

The rumour about a poison entails *'karoho',* a poison 'made in Rwanda'. This poison is perceived as a speciality of the Banyarwanda, especially the Batutsi, even though the Bahutu also use poison to do away with their enemies. Besides the Banyarwanda, other ethnic groups are singled out by their neighbours as employing witchcraft and poison, as well as being killers and cannibals.

As for beliefs in the forces of evil and work of the devil, rumours circulate about victims being bewitched, amongst them even political and religious leaders. Mgr Christophe Munzihirwa, who was killed by AFDL Rwandan and Ugandan troops is said to have been a victim of an assassination attempt by close colleagues. Mgr Emmanuel Kataliko, his successor, is said to have been poisoned by Norbert Basengezi Katintima, then the Governor, in complicity with others close to the archbishop. As for Mgr Charles Mbogha Kambale, he was bewitched by those anxious to get rid of him.

According to the rumourmongers, the only explanations for the deaths of these three archbishops in less than ten years are poison and sorcery, especially as they all died in the fateful month of October: Msgr Ch. Munzihirwa died on the night of 29 October 1996; his successor, Msgr E. Kataliko, died in Rome on 4 October 2000; and quite recently the latter's successor, Msgr Ch. Mbogha Kambale died on 9 October 2005.

V.2 Stereotypes and Prejudice

The use of stereotypes and other types of clichés varies with the circumstances and according to the interests of the members of the various tribal and ethnic communities. One group stigmatises the other by using proverbs, maxims and songs while on the other hand community members will take advantage of clichés and maxims that exonerate, praise or, in short, show them in the best light.

Rwandans:

Following the various wars of aggression, the term 'Rwandan' has acquired a pejorative connotation. The Congolese consider Rwandan anyone who betrays, behaves aggressively or swindles relationships and community interests because for the Congolese, the Rwandans are harbingers of doom and troublemakers.

'Wavamizi' ['the raiders']:

Used by the Congolese to describe the behaviour of Rwandans who came to the Congo

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under the pretext of liberating them when in fact they came to attack and colonise the Congolese and exploit their wealth.

'Meno inje' ['the men with protruding teeth']:

When they want to let off steam or whisper about the Banyamulenge or Tutsi from South-Kivu, the Congolese use this word to identify those who can't close their mouths. It looks as if their teeth are always ready to bite, a sign of resentment.

'Perpetrators of genocide', 'bloodthirsty', 'treacherous', 'segregationist', 'selfish', 'hypocrites', 'belligerent despots', 'ungrateful', 'uncircumcised', 'resentful' etc.:

The Bafuliru use these stereotypes to describe the Banyamulenge.

'Banyabungo' ['those who lie']:

This expression dates from colonial times and is the equivalent of the Kiswahili word, *'Benyebongo'* [liars]. The Bashi were reputed to be liars who cheated the White man who eventually gave them this nickname. Today, other tribes, especially the Barega, use it to tease the Bashi. According to stereotype, the Bashi are considered to be liars, thieves, the uncivilised, etc.

'Eyon'era omuhanya e Rwanda éhubuka' ['The cow that destroys or plunders a poor man's field comes from Rwanda']:

This proverb, used by the Bashi, is used to stress that all their ills come from Rwanda. Rains come from the direction of Rwanda to beat down on the Bashi. By analogy, the Mushi believes that all the wars that ravage the Congo and especially the Bashi, come from Rwanda.

'Mukuyakuya ['He who comes from afar, any stranger to a given culture, a social-climber etc.']:

This expression is used by the Bashi and others to describe anyone foreign to their culture, in other words an outsider, a non-indigenous person who doesn't fit in with their lifestyle. It is used to ridicule, denigrate and indirectly slander an outsider.

'Sorcerer or witch':
A common stereotype used for Barega women and young girls. Other tribes consider them to be pilots without planes since Barega women travel at night on the wind to commit witchcraft. This is particularly prevalent between the Bashi and the Barega. Each time a Murega calls a Mushi a *Munyabungo,* a Mushi will retaliate with, *'Mulozi we!'* [You witch!]

Through watching the behaviour and habits of neighbouring compatriots, some social groups in Southern Kivu finish by making nicknames that sooner or later are used to taunt. Careful examination of these social clichés has shown us that most of the stereotypes are between Bashi and Barega, the two dominant tribes of Southern Kivu. One would have expected armed conflict between them but, in fact, it was noted that there was no extreme or generalised animosity. It is as if these discriminatory factors do not really touch on each other's essential and identifying traits. It seems rather that they primarily serve the purpose of differentiation.

Nevertheless, we noted that stereotypes invented in a context of open conflict, rivalry and war are abusive and intended to humiliate the opponent or to incite a confrontation. When taken outside of a joke certain stereotypes are a time bomb, which could lead to open conflict if they are not carefully managed by the communities and ethnic groups.

In conclusion, whether stereotypes appear or not is determined by the type of relationships between groups and the opposition and rivalry that exists between these groups. Stereotypes are rarely vehicles for positive messages; on the contrary they are nearly always negative. They often have negative repercussions as witnessed in the unfortunate consequences that have arisen in the conflictual context of South Kivu.

V.3. Myths, Epic Tales and Legends

Myths about the Nyanga: the Banyanga are considered to be uncivilised by their neighbours the Bahunde, Banande and others. The Nyanga is therefore reputed to be mushenzi but better organised and more cultured than the Muhunde. The Nyanga have few children. Their wives are loose women because they work in the mines. In similar fashion to the Hunde, they appreciate meat and are consequently cannibals and sorcerers.

The unspoken element in the myth about the Banyanga is that they are a race of sorcerers and consequently dangerous. They are to be avoided at all costs, above all because they eat human flesh.

Karoho: One version of this myth relates that around 1959, in Rugari (a village located more than 30 km away from Goma), a chap poured sulphuric acid into a drink for personal vengeance, killing a family of six.

The unspoken aspect of the *Karoho* myth is that the poison is generally associated with Rwandans and especially Tutsis. Rwandans are as much involved in witchcraft as their neighbours from the Great Lakes Region but they are worse because they poison people.

Bahavu & Banyarwanda: According to this myth the Bahavu are Banyarwanda. Young girls, who accidentally fell pregnant, were left on the island of Idjwi by their parents as punishment. From there the Banyarwanda came and took them as wives. The underlying message in the Bahavu and Banyarwanda myth is that the Bahavu are bastards, hybrids, born out of a sinful union. They are of doubtful nationality and two-faced; consequently a Congolese cannot trust them, just as they cannot trust the Rwandans.

According to the Tutsi myth, the Tutsi are at the origin of all conflicts in the North Kivu. The Tutsi is an outsider, son of King Solomon, who came from Ethiopia or Egypt where the cow is sacred and a divinity.

Here the underlying message about the Tutsi is that they are a poor people, and inferior to the Hutu. They like to be labelled refugees so that their children will be educated and have an opportunity to go to the West and live alongside whites. They were the cause of the carnage in the Kivu because of their familiarity with whites. They kill the influential and hunt down the native, just as the children of Israel were hunted down in Palestine.

6. *Rwabugiri:* The Bashi from the DRC and the Banyarwanda (Tutsi) had good neighbourly relations for decades despite inevitable border conflicts. Strong tensions arose during the first battle of the *Mwami* Rutaganda against the famous Rwabugiri, former king of the Banyarwanda (Tutsi). The *Mwami* Rwabugiri died in 1895 on a dugout canoe that was bringing him back from an expedition to Kivu.

The message inferred in the Rwabugiri myth is the bravery of the Mushi over the Munyarwanda thus proving that the Rwandans will never triumph over the Bashi. Even when the Banyarwanda appear to dominate over the Congolese and especially the Bashi, supernatural forces will rally to help the latter because their cause is a 'just' one and justified by the Rwabugiri myth.

The Namukumba myth tells how Namukumba was a 'pure spirit' created by Nyamuzinda but who saw fit to inhabit a fetish-priest known as his 'keeper'. He came from Rwanda to Bushi where he created a stir by erecting all at once the huge Nyidunga mountain that lies to the west of Nyangezi.

The underlying message in this myth is that the origins of the inhabitants of Mukumba, a village located beyond Nyangezi in South Kivu, lie in Rwanda. Although they are created by 'God' (Nyamuzinda), these inhabitants share a common blood tie with the Banyarwanda.

8. *The myth of Kangere* tells of the adventure of Kangere, son of Namukumba. He had three sisters and lived with them in Bushi. One day they had to flee the country and found refuge in Rwanda where they died.

The Kangere myth always ends with, 'shortly afterwards they died in Rwanda'. Other myths in the same vein, tell how the few Bashi that found asylum in Rwanda and none came back alive. Hence the almost categorical refusal of Congolese to seek exile in Rwanda, thought of as 'enemy territory', since one cannot flee one danger only to run into another or the same danger. It is better to die at home of hunger or disease rather than seek asylum or refuge in Rwanda.

Lirangwe: The epic of Lirangwe tells of the romantic adventure of Lirangwe, the *mwami* [King] of Bugweshe, who left for Buhaya (Kabare) to conquer the heart of Mugenye, a legendary beauty. In the end Lirangwe managed to conquer his loved one's heart. The union created jealousies in Mugenye's family. Niganda's daughter and her brother Mushoko decided to drive Lirangwe from their sister, Mugenye's, home. The two of them alone could not achieve their plans so they went to Rwanda and asked for reinforcements from Rwabugiri who could not turn them down.

The underlying message of the Lirangwe myth: 'Hurting' Lirangwe with eight blows of a sword is nothing short of killing him, or cutting his throat! To delight in the spectacle of Mugenye tending the wounds of her lover, is a little cynical. As for the victim, we see Lirangwe set upon, making victims in the enemy camp too: "I will not return until I have slaughtered a few Tutsi"'.

In the media-speak of today, the word 'slaughter' is a metaphor used more often for humans than animals. Human death has been trivialized to that of animals. We learn from the media that "during the night, X was slaughtered in cold blood, by unknown persons in his own home!" This metaphor is an expression of the violent mentality and

human barbarity that has become part and parcel of the times in which we live. To "slaughter a few Tutsi" suggests that they are despicable sub-humans that can be 'slaughtered' without a second thought. The sword, lance, arrow, knife, stick etc. are termed as 'light weapons' and are much referred to and used in this epic; they are valued more highly because they are used to split open the enemy's face and make blood flow.

The Nkundiye epic tale relates the heroic story of the king of Idjwi, a Congolese island on the border with Rwanda. At the outset Nkundiye allies with the Rwandan king, Rwabugiri who helps him to power, but later Nkundiye defects and Rwabugiri kills him and takes his head to Rwanda to decorate the royal drum. The ancestors' spirits cannot stand such humiliation. Rwabugiri dies hallucinating pursued into his own royal court by Nkundiye heavily escorted by the young Lirangwe (he was also assassinated by the Banyarwanda at Bugobe). Lirangwe was the father of Ruhongeka who was in turn father of Mafundwe.

The sub plot of the Nkundiye epic: the epic tale or myth passes down people's deeply held beliefs about the key problems of human existence, but it is done in a symbolic manner[8].

The Nkundiye epic tale conveys all the resentment held by one or several community groups towards another, simply because the myths and epic tales have interpreted them in this way. It is paramount to seek vengeance, avenge the brother who has suffered, and avenge all the community.

Intercommunity suspicion towards the population living on the island of Idjwi originates in various legends and myths, including those of Nkundiye and Rwabugiri. Throughout history the friendly and hostile relations that have existed between the Rwandan population and the Idjwi islanders have often led to manipulations aimed at portraying the islanders as being of doubtful nationality—in other words, Rwandan. Furthermore ancient myths strengthen suspicions concerning Rwandan expansionist intentions whereby Rwanda will sooner or later launch military expeditions into the region of the Bahavu, Bashi and Bahunde (Walungu, Kabare, Bukavu, Idjwi, Kalehe, Goma, Nyiragongo, Rutshuru, Masisi and Walikale)[9].

Conclusions

Concerning rumours in Kivu

Frequently, the political, economic and cultural contexts encourage the emergence of rumours. Therefore it would be wrong to examine the underlying line of thought without taking into consideration the context that gives rise to the rumours. The background of armed conflicts, a dismembered administration up against myriad rebellions and militias, the war of aggression led by Rwanda, Uganda, Burundi and allies are live realities that have inspired and fed the rumours to be found in pamphlets and gossip.

Concerning stereotypes and prejudice in Kivu

Stereotypes convey, through constant readjustment, the fundamental and permanent problems of peaceful co-existence between ethnic groups. Therefore the whole of South

8   G.DEFOUR, *Les mythes en Afrique,* dans Recherches africaines, n°14, Cerdaf, 2004, p.8.
9   VANGU Mambweni, *Guerres préméditées en région des grands lacs : rôles et tentacules du Tutsi International Power en République Démocratique du Congo,* 2000, p.153

Kivu society must properly manage these stereotypes in order to reach a compromise with itself, an indispensable re-adaptation, if it is to reach fulfilment. It is here that the insight of the present study must be applauded for it is an opportunity to reflect and to share with a view to 'repairing' our society that has fallen prey to the virus of tribal hate and division.

Concerning myths

A myth, as G. Defour's writings illustrate, is not a true story: it is imaginary. Nevertheless the ideas that it relates, the convictions of the elders that it reflects and crystallizes, are true and worthy of belief in the sense that it represents a systematic chain of symbols set out by men. This is why it is 'pregnant' with meaning, an object of initiation and belief, not so much for the images that it conveys but for the ideas it symbolises[10].

Thus it follows that retrieving and rehabilitating myths in order to further other motives, often leads to a war of epic tales between communities, one epic tale gives rise to a counter offensive, a response in the same vein, which will delve as much into legends as into ancient myths.

Ethnic leaders therefore resort to this type of literature aiming to counterattack, responding to literature with literature, using the written word to rebuff and stifle plots hatched by the common enemy. Many Congolese today name Burundi, Rwanda and Uganda as East Africa's 'axis of evil', a troika of foreign aggressors that has stood out in the Congolese crisis through its support to rebels of the RCD, the MLC, and others. This axis of evil, imaginary or not, reveals a diverse selection of intercommunity resentment and animosity, whose roots seem to be profoundly set in myths of origin, legends and stereotypes, and which are regularly invoked, unearthed and updated by political players, ostensibly in the interests of the community. These episodic wars fed by myths and legends are extremely effective in mobilising the consciousness of the masses, and could, if they are not doing so already, rekindle resentment and armed conflict between ethnic groups or communities in the Great Lakes Region.

Combating rumour and the exploitation of myths

One of the best ways to stamp out rumours would be to provide the population with accurate, sufficient and timely information. Cultivating a culture of transparency and communication instead of retreating into an ivory tower, secret and closed. Even then, the bet is not totally won since rumour in many societies plays a role in social catharsis. Therefore nothing can be completely effective in numbing once and for all, the memory and genius of those who, through the rumours they dream up and sow, express themselves, play to the gallery and gain fame.

As for myths and legends, the authors recommend demystifying, deconstructing and demythologising them. The process would include a series of actions and operations that could help, even in a small way, to put the (negative) force of myths and rumours into perspective. Such a series of actions could also highlight the value of intercultural exchanges between communities. By acknowledging shared values within diverse ethnic groups, intercommunity contact would be encouraged thus reducing suspicion. Actions like these would contribute a great deal to harmonising social relations and peaceful coexistence in the Great Lakes Region.

10 G.DEFOUR, *Les mythes en Afrique, dans Recherches africaines,* n°14, Cerdaf, 2004, p.9.

5

Rwandans and Congolese: Suspicion and the Hope of Peaceful Co-existence

By Professor. Sebahire Déo MBONYINKEBE

Introduction

1. Motivation, Context and Significance

A year ago, when the idea of setting up a network of regional analysts was born, and a choice had to be made among the topics for the cross-border research, the Great Lakes Region was experiencing much tension and conflict. This followed from the genocide in Rwanda and the decline and disintegration of government authority in the former Zaire, now the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). The repercussions were particularly being felt in the Eastern fringe of the DRC encompassing North and South-Kivu, and well beyond that—in Rwanda and Burundi. (J. Hugo, 2006) Many wondered then if, as the very optimistic Belgian, Louis Michel, had hoped, there remained any chance for the Economic Community of the Great Lakes (Communauté Economique des Grands Lacs—CEPGL) to emerge after its three member states—Rwanda, Burundi and the Democratic Republic of Congo had plunged it into eighteen years of deep coma.

At the same time, the UN, through its Security Council beefed up its peacekeeping forces in the sub-region in an attempt to rein in trouble-making elements that were threatening peace drives in Rwanda and Burundi, and the transition towards socio-political stability such as in the Democratic Republic of Congo. However, deep cracks remained, as the people and governments of the three countries remained deeply mired in suspicion. The Congolese especially harboured a deep-rooted hatred and fear towards the Rwandans following the two successive wars in the DRC in 1996 and 1998. The anti-Rwanda feelings particularly ran high in the towns of Goma and Bukavu.

Since then the situation, in especially the Democratic Republic of Congo, has experienced a remarkable improvement. Elections were held in a climate of uncertainty but they were ultimately accepted as legitimate, albeit the new regime in Kinshasa was immediately faced with a multitude of challenges. The widespread anti-Rwanda sentiment, particularly anti-Tutsi, that had punctuated the election campaign either directly or indirectly, soon reared its head in the internal political competition. It was to goad the new government into renewed conflict with Rwandan-backed groups operating in the DRC and, ultimately, with Rwanda itself.

The Economic Community of the Great Lakes is in the throes of a voluntary re-launch. So one could question the pertinence of our chosen research theme. In our view, the issue in question has maintained its relevance. This is an attempt to understand in depth the role of perverse communication in the exacerbation of violence with ethnic connotations, the result of machinations by an elite, who are past masters in the art of instrumentalising ethno-nationalistic sentiments. (R.LEMARCHAND, 2000)

2. Some Operational Issues

Below are the guidelines that inspired the fairly flexible hypotheses for this exploratory phase of research in the topic:

a) How did suspicion arise between the populations of the two countries and why does it linger when there are signs of peace on the horizon?

b) What has made the suspicions worse?

c) In concrete terms, how is it visible?

d) What consequences does it have in terms of peace for the sub-region?

e) What solutions can be considered and implemented to reduce or otherwise eradicate the lack of reciprocal trust?

3. Hypotheses

Let us formulate a few hypotheses on this topic. We must stress that these hypotheses are necessarily selective and realistic at the same time. We will revisit them in suitable commentaries later on.

a) Psycho-sociological and communicational aspects, borne out in rumours, prejudice, stereotypes, negative *'mythomoteurs'* or engines for myth and the generation of suspicion, represent an important element in the socio-political nature of the Great Lakes Region (the case of the DRC and Rwanda being the only one directly and explicitly addressed);

b) Suspicion between the populations of the two countries (Rwanda and DRC) is due, in part at least, to the causes and consequences of conflicting relations spread over nearly a decade, starting notably with the first war, known as liberation (October 1996-1998) right up to the second war, known by some as 'rectification' (August 1998-July 2002), and which is something of an enigma, especially as far as its motives on the Congolese side are concerned, when compared to the first war.

4. Research Objectives

The research objectives were as follows:

a) Making an inventory of suspicion and its manifestations

b) Identifying and analysing the distant and proximate causes as well as their consequences, notably in terms of rumours, prejudice, stereotypes and *'mythomoteurs'* and mythic history

c) Exploring ways and means to restore confidence and a proactive cooperation in relations between groups and populations, thus encouraging sustainable development for all, notably through revamped styles of communication that promote behaviour that no longer makes 'outcasts'.

5. Target Groups

At the outset, we opted to only observe only the Congolese community. This was based on the idea that they represented the dual advantage of holding both an insider and outsider point of view on the attitude encountered in a foreign community. Through its proximity with the community of origin located in the Democratic Republic of Congo and its new land of welcome, Rwanda, this community would potentially have the advantage of quite a reliable knowledge of a dual situation. Moreover we estimated that a comparative view of the research results *in situ* would be possible through the documenting of data based on the self-image or self-view of the host community. Following exchanges and discussions with colleagues from RAN, we decided a more complete approach would be to include responses from Rwandans themselves, which nonetheless does not in any way diminish the relevance of the proposals mentioned above.

5.1. Observation Sites

As for the observation sites, initially we decided on border areas due to the frequency and density of cross-border social interaction (see remarks on this topic in the general introduction). Specifically, we used a questionnaire to poll opinion in Gisenyi in the North-West of Rwanda, with reference to Goma in the DRC, and Cyangugu in the East. The neighbouring town of Bukavu was however excluded.

Then came, Kigali, Rwanda's capital, where there is a remarkably active Congolese community, featuring an elementary and secondary school that are also attended by a large number of Rwandan children. The fourth site chosen was the university city of Butare, where there are quite a few Congolese students studying at the National University of Rwanda as well as Congolese working in secondary schools.

According to the *Third General Census of Rwandan Population and Living Conditions* dated 15 April 2002 (SNS, 2005), there were approximately 390,170 Congolese living in Rwanda. Most of these were concentrated in urban areas (60%), with women being in the majority (51.5%) and with a notable presence in Kigali, Cyangugu, Kibuye, Gisenyi, Ruhengeri, Byumba and Umutara. The population is younger than the national average and growing all the time. Unfortunately, it must be noted that during the survey period, no basic demographic data available was available. According to confidential information obtained from immigration officials, it is impossible to control the clandestine immigration of Congolese nationals into Rwanda. This provided further

justification for our decision to take a qualitative approach through non-probability sampling, although there are additional reasons for this.

5.2. Sampling

Originally, we intended to target two hundred subjects (200) for the study spread out proportionally at the various sites depending on the basic statistical data. This number should match a concern for a more qualitative approach demanded by the research question concerning the reasoned choice of subjects in relation to small sampling. (N.BERTHIER: 1998: 125)

Taking into account the complexity and scope of the research and the type of questions asked, one of the initial issues was to discern the level of the subjects' intellectual understanding. Hence the selection of the Kigali Independent University (ULK)—Gisenyi—60 subjects of whom 15 were Congolese, the Rwandan sample consisting of 19 native Rwandans and 11 descendants of refugees from 1959 originating from the DRC and 11 others; Kigali (Congolese community), 60 subjects; Butare (60 subjects, of whom 34 were Congolese secondary school teachers and 26 university students. Lastly, in Cyangugu, there were 64 subjects surveyed, including 18 secondary school teachers and 46 Rwandans. We will mention in passing the difficulty in obtaining the exact figures for the Congolese that cross over to Rwanda because many such people do not register with the immigration service. Altogether, 204 people were surveyed.

5.3. Preparatory Study

This was carried out systematically in August 2006 in the town of Kigali and then repeated in each of the sites prior to the launch of the final questionnaire on a reduced number of 5 subjects. The conclusions were:

■ The research question appears to be fascinating and topical, especially with regard to the manifestation of suspicion between the Congolese and Rwandan populations, their causes and consequences and the urgency of normalising relations between these populations.

■ Some explanations for the presence of rumours and myths, not to mention prejudice and stereotypes, are clearly seen in the effects, both real and imagined, of the two Congo wars, (rape, slaughter and massacres, looting, the immense loss of human life, spread of AIDS, etc.);

■ The role of the media—especially the international media— in exacerbating the feelings of hatred is pinpointed;

■ The complexity of the questions asked is highlighted, as well as the overlapping of the indicators (rumours, prejudice, stereotypes and myths) with the resultant danger that some respondents confuse them;

■ Similarly, the political sensitivity of the topics was underlined. The researchers would require a great deal of tact in administering the questionnaire.

5.4. Deciding Who would be Polled

This was done through a combination of volunteering, that is through sampling

volunteers who were also deemed to be suitable volunteers (T. BAKER 1998: 157-158; N. BERTHIER: 122) and through snowball sampling, a non-random technique that involves identifying a few subjects that respond to the criteria in the study. Through these subjects one finds other suitable subjects and so forth. (T.L.BAKER, ibid., 159; N. BERTHER, ibid., 122). Considering that these techniques not only bring into play a personal motivation to respond, but they also utilise the links and exchanges of the subjects' social network, we thought there was a good chance of obtaining reliable results, especially as the subjects are involved in the research sites with experiences both shared and specific, as in the case of Gisenyi and Cyangugu (for a discussion on non-statistically representative sampling, see R. GIGLIONE and B. MATALON, 1997: 53).

5.5. *Techniques for Collecting Data*

The techniques employed were documentary research, questionnaires and interviews.

6. Conclusions and Recommendations

1. Conclusions

At the start of our research we wanted to examine the link that existed on the one hand between rumours, prejudice, stereotypes and myths and, on the other hand, the suspicion between the populations of the sub-region (in the case of Rwanda and the DRC. It was a question of verifying this supposed relationship by identifying the genesis and evolution of this climate of suspicion, the reasons why it worsened over time and most importantly, its manifestations as well as the resultant consequences on the peace deficit in the sub-region. Lastly, by examining the table finally drawn up, we arrived at short, medium and long-term proposals.

From the results that were largely tallied from the various empirical survey sites, it appears that:

■ Rumours, prejudice, stereotypes and myths are ever present between the two populations, and in general they are extremely negative in orientation and counter-productive to the building of peace in the sub-region;

■ The party more disposed to this negative orientation seems to be the DRC in regard to its eastern populations, not forgetting that this influence has also tainted, albeit to a lesser degree, its the western side;

■ Although this negative outlook and the strong suspicion held by the Congolese against the Rwandans in the sites visited may have some far-off origins, it is clear that the belligerences dating from 1996 during the two Congo wars caused such a terrible deterioration in relations between the two peoples that any process aimed at re-establishing true cooperation and mutual confidence will be long in coming. The re-launch of the Economic Community of the Great Lakes (Communauté Economique des Grands Lacs—CEPGL) will be an opportunity and a link to generate useful initiatives in this direction along this path, without forgetting the pertinent proposals put forward by people interviewed in the survey.

2. Recommendations

Among the many recommendations made, the following can be cited:

- Renew diplomatic relations;

- Sensitise the peoples of both countries to peace, dialogue and reconciliation;

- Fight ethnicity and exclusion wherever they appear using all available means, including use of legal mechanisms.

- Permanently solve the issue of Congolese refugees and put an end to the presence of 'negative forces' in the Democratic Republic of Congo;

- Make politicians change their behaviour that has often served to stoke and heighten suspicion and conflict;

- Ensure that good governance is maintained in both countries and that human rights are strictly respected and protected;

- Include the media in all the peace and conflict reducing initiatives;

- Extend the same to civil society and religious groups in both countries;

- Fully encourage exchanges between the youth in both countries at all levels and specifically through civics programmes;

- Support Rwanda's efforts to end its internal disputes or at least what remains of it;

- Equally, and in the interests of their respective populations, encourage the DRC to stabilize its political situation, particularly to facilitate the exploitation of resources shared with Rwanda.

- Exploit the full potential of the university networks in the sub region, with a view to the scientific production of more objective and less heated work that is capable of making a specific contribution to lasting peace.

We believe that we have generally achieved the objectives we set out to achieve in the study. As a reminder this was to:

- Draw up an inventory on the presence of suspicion and its manifestations between the populations of Rwanda and that of its neighbours with specific reference to the DRC;

- Identify the proximate and distant causes and their consequences notably in the case of rumours, prejudice, stereotypes and *mythomoteurs;*

- Explore ways and means of restoring peace and mutual confidence to a satisfactory level, favourable to the sustainable development of all.

- Clearly the conclusions and proposals contained in this study need to be followed up so that they can be implemented in the field according to indicated guidelines. New research direction highlighted by these conclusions and proposals include legislation, collective education, communication and the circulation of goods, people and ideas. These conclusions and proposals must also firmly adhere to the imperatives of reconciliation, justice and inclusiveness (Nzongola Ntalaja, 2002: 264).

6

GROUP FOR THE RESEARCH AND SUPPORT OF DEMOCRATIC DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVES (GRADIS)

Rumours, Prejudices and Stereotypes among Burundians, and between Burundians and Neighbouring Populations in Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of Congo: The Products of Suspicion and Conflict

By: Dr. Christophe SEBUDANDI et Antoine NTIRANDEKURA

I. Introduction

It is easier to split an atom than to eliminate prejudice.

—Albert Einstein

Context and Motivation

A divided society in conflict is fertile soil for rumours, prejudice and stereotypes, that beget suspicion and heighten tension, in turn fuelling conflict that provides a favourable environment for rumours to proliferate. This study focuses on the phenomena of rumour, prejudice and stereotypes among the people of Burundi; and between Burundians and their neighbours in Rwanda and in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).

Just as in any country where information has been controlled by the State for a long time Burundi was, and remains, propitious for the formation of rumours. Sometimes the State or certain government agencies propound rumours with the clear objective of manipulating public opinion.

Occasionally rumours have it hard. They spring up, spread and then disappear. But they can also resurface, sometimes unchanged, sometimes having undergone mutation or in a different

form. Their appearance is often linked to the background from which they arise, according to the challenges, tensions, fears and hopes of the moment. An analysis of 'the stamp rumour', that cropped up for the first time in November 1960, just before the first multi-party elections in Burundi, shows that a rumour must not be interpreted in a localized setting but rather in the social setting of the space where it developed, taking into account that events linked to a rumour reveal the structure of the general psychology[11]. This rumour has an uncanny resemblance to the poisoned syringes rumour that appeared forty years later in October 2004, once again in election campaign circumstances.

The research was focussed on stereotypes and prejudice. They seem to be important in the organisation of behaviour and communication between ethnic and national groups. They are generally composed of curt, cut-and-dried and biased opinions that mould relationships between individuals and groups. Prejudice and stereotypes make up a bottomless reserve, continually refreshed, tainting relationships and feeding fears and anxiety, rejecting and excluding all those who are considered different[12].

This is an essentially qualitative study aimed at various categories in the population. The chosen groups were: the population in general (men and women), administrative and religious authorities, refugee populations, local eminent persons or personalities and students at the University of Burundi who rub shoulders with professors and students from all three countries involved in the research namely, Burundi, Rwanda and DRC.

Six provinces from the country were selected, namely Bururi, Bujumbura (the capital), Cibitoke, Gitega, Kirundo and Muyinga. They were chosen for their geographical position and for the cooperation between the populations under study. In all, the study was carried out through focus groups and in-depth interviews in 17 districts between 25th September and 1st October 2006.

II. Rumours

Rumours within the Burundi population

Practically all the people interviewed confirmed that they knew, from hearing about them, the rumours circulating in their districts, quarters or hills where they lived. These rumours are numerous and diverse but most of them had in common suspicion and mistrust between the Hutu and Tutsi communities.

The most prevalent rumours are about murderous attacks and inter-ethnic killings—for example one ethnic group suspecting the other of wanting to attack, kill and exterminate them. While on this subject, rumours such as[13] 'The Tutsi assisted by the Government soldiers want to attack us' and, in similar fashion, 'Hutus supported by armed gangs want to come and eliminate us' circulated nearly everywhere throughout the country. A persistent rumour circulating within the Hutu community says that, 'as the Tutsis have been reduced to the smallest proportion, if they try to raise their heads, we shall kill them all'.

Another category of rumours concerns assassinations. The most frequent and widespread concern the poisoning of Tutsis in bars frequented by Hutus, and poisoned syringes used by Tutsi to reduce

11 Christine Deslaurier, the stamp rumour in Burundi (1960-1961). This infamous rumour led to a very serious incident that occurred at Muzinda market, in Bubanza territory. A native sitting at a table in a bar, someone suddenly got up screaming that the stamp on his arm had been put there by supporters of the PDC, who according to rumour, mark their political enemies in this way. The market crowd, an estimated 500 people, thronged together, arrested the guilty party and burned him on a hastily assembled pyre. (Taken from Rudipresse, Kitega, No. 230 :4 to 1st July 1960)
12 See the website on this topic: www.planeteNONviolence.org.
13 In Kirundi the terms used for these two rumours are respectively: 'Abatutsi bagomba kudutera bafashijwe n'abasoda' ; 'Abahutu bafashijwe n'imirwi yitwaje ibirwanisho bashaka kuduhonya'.

the number of Hutus so that they are equivalent in number to the Tutsis. The latter was frequently heard prior to the elections, and caused casualties— victims lynched as suspects of using the deadly syringes. Others say that AIDS is being transmitted either during vaccination programmes or by women fetching water in the evening. In Muyinga, two imaginary doctors, one Tutsi, one Hutu, were said to be inoculating people from the other ethnic group with the HIV/AIDS virus.

Yet another set of rumours is about witchcraft. Usually in this case, exactly who the sorcerer or the victim is remains vague. Apart from Bujumbura, this rumour was found in all the survey locations. These accusations, which turned out to be pure fantasy, often led to the assassination of those accused of being wicked witches. Personal conflict and the settling of old scores are usually behind the accusations.

Many long-standing and persistent rumours have either a certain policy and its consequences, or a very specific political agenda as a backdrop. Among the rumours overheard were of the eventual assassination of the President, a putsch in preparation, the massacre or flight of the ethnic group that lost the election, the ousting of Tutsis from all key posts in the event of a CNDD-FDD[14] victory, the arrest and assassination of certain opposition leaders, etc.

Other types of rumours were more difficult to classify in these categories, because they are associated with a local context and the fear, anxiety and hopes of the inhabitants of that area. It's a mix of rosy and gloomy rumours as was found elsewhere (for example fears linked to the return of refugees from 1972, anxiety about raids on herds in Cibitoke, fantasies about people getting rich quick if they work underground, the miraculous effects of honey on AIDS victims, etc.).

Types of rumours and channels used for spreading them

Most rumours are gloomy[15], breaking news of wrongdoing, catastrophe, danger or treason. The most widespread and persistent concern the Tutsi genocide; attacks and killings between ethnic communities (Hutu and Tutsi); coups d'etat; planned assassinations and witchcraft. Generally speaking, rumours are passed by word of mouth, between friends or people with similar affinities, or through leaflets left at crossroads or other busy places frequented in the evening or used by night patrols.

Some of the rumours collected are peaceful (or rosy), because they do not frighten people and have no disastrous consequences. These rumours frequently mirror the people's aspirations for improved living conditions and usually crop up in periods of calm, at specific times in the year. The way they spread is more surreptitious than for gloomy rumours. They are passed around in public places (markets, churches, cafés etc), during work in the fields, in offices and other busy places.

Periods of tension, war, attacks and insecurity; socio-political crises, the run-up and aftermath to elections; new events such as a change in political power, ministerial reshuffles and negotiations—all these are particularly conducive to starting and spreading rumours.

The effect of rumour on the relations between Burundians and Rwandans

Cooperation and interaction between the populations of Burundi and Rwanda have naturally led to the proliferation of rumours about their mutual relations. The most widespread and recurrent can be broken down into three categories; relations between both countries, between both ethnic groups and lastly between citizens of both countries.

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14 Nta mututsi atari muri CNDD-FDD azosubira kuronka igiti.
15 Jean-Noël Kapférer, Rumeurs. *Le plus vieux média du monde,* [Rumours, the oldest media in the world] Editions du seuil, 1987.

A widespread and recurrent rumour talks of an imminent attack from Rwanda in Burundi. There are three main reasons motivating this attack: the pursuit of Interahamwe refugees in Burundi; the expansion of its territory; and the recovery of territory (Bugesera), territory that Burundi annexed. This rumour specifies that the new border will be positioned at the junction of Ngozi-Muyinga-Kirundo, approximately 30 kms from Muyinga and Kirundo.

Rumours about relations between Burundi and Rwanda become entangled with Rwanda-Congo rumours, with people talking about Rwanda's intention to attack the Democratic Republic of Congo. Occasionally even rumours about Uganda make their appearance. These fears and anxiety sometimes find their base in an ambition to conquer or dominate attributed to Rwanda. A myth surrounding the 'Greater Rwanda', ever present in rumours, seems to have been emulated.

Similarities between the ethnic composition of Rwanda and Burundi and the real or supposed alliances and ties that have existed in the past—all regularly come to nourish rumours. Based on myths surrounding the Hima Empire and its opposite extreme, an alliance of Hutu forces in the region, rumours are spread about coalitions that are being formed, on one side and on the other, that will result in clashes, and then all-out war called *'simusiga'* (i.e. that is devastating and exterminating).

One series of rumours targets Rwandan citizens, especially those who have sought refuge fleeing from Gacaca, simple travellers who have been mistaken for spies in Kirundo province, or who rumours say have grown rich quickly through trade in human skulls. Finally a rumour that dates from 1993 claims that Rwandans (Tutsis) all voted for the UPRONA party.

Rumours on relations between populations in Burundi and Congo

A wealth of rumours has been collected on the relations between the two countries and their populations. Frequent and persistent rumours ascribe to each country the intention of attacking the other for diverse reasons. From a Burundi point of view, an attack would be justified not only by a need to reduce the size of armed groups but also due to expansionist policies aimed at annexing part of the Congo. Other rumours give the Banyamulenge vague intentions of attacking the DRC in revenge for their expulsion, with the intent of controlling their territory with the support of General Nkunda and neighbouring countries.

An attack on Burundi by the DRC would be justified by a need to win back part of a territory rich in oil that Burundi is said to have annexed on the Rusizi side, and give back land that Burundians have taken from the Congo. It would also be an occasion to support the Interahamwe who have sought refuge on its territory in order to recover Rwanda by passing through Burundi or to allow the Mayi-Mayi to chase the Banyamulenge, who have taken refuge in Burundi.

Another common type of rumour is about Congolese citizens. They are connected to various aspects of their life and the relations they keep with Burundians. They are linked to the various professional categories that have a conflictual relationship with Burundians, for example teachers or Banyamulenge pastoralists found in Cibitoke Province.

Credit given to rumours

Generally speaking rumours enjoy tremendous credibility with the population, especially rumours that deal with relations between ethnic groups and populations of neighbouring countries. Those rumours that frighten and kindle suspicion, hatred, fear and mistrust enjoy the most credibility. Rumours are all the more acceptable to the population when they are justified by the people questioned who have known similar circumstances, and that these circumstances are prone to reappearance. Simply to say they don't believe the rumours would be to lay oneself open to them.

Overall, rumours are accepted for the following reasons: the potential risk for the populations involved or the consequences of plausible and foreseeable events on the populations (the likelihood of the event happening); the credibility for the source of the rumour, the person who tells and recounts the facts[16]; a lack of genuine and objective information from a credible source; the stubborn nature of some rumours, and their selective aspect depending on which ethnic group is being targeted.

Channels used to spread rumours - individuals or groups with a vested interest in starting, spreading and perpetuating rumours

In all three cases, the channels used to spread rumours are, with a few exceptions, more or less identical, regarding on the area of interaction. It is by word of mouth such as conversations between friends, between people from the same ethnic community or of the same nationality. It can also be through leaflets discarded in busy areas or close to houses. Otherwise, it is through exchanges between populations that frequently cross the border, namely Burundians and Rwandans, Burundians and Congolese

As far as individuals or groups with a vested interest in spreading and perpetuating rumours is concerned, the finger points to politicians (whether political leaders or leaders of political parties) as being the starters and main beneficiaries of the spread of rumours, particularly when they divide the population. Politicians use their supporters, sometimes by paying them, to pass off rumours as genuine information to their clients (members) and the rest of the population. Sometimes politicians start rumours to create a feeling of insecurity so that they can get rich. According to an old Kirundi adage 'if a catastrophe doesn't kill you, it will make you rich[17].'

Those questioned see a direct link between the spread of rumours and corruption and bad governance. 'Rumours are spread by those in high places to protect their interests. Even if it sows chaos, they do it deliberately'. In Burundi, armed groups have been singled out as the authors of rumours that divide and frighten in order to attract sympathisers from their ethnic group. However any criminal or profiteer would do it to meet their ends.

III. Stereotypes and Prejudices

Ethnic stereotypes and prejudice between Burundians

Stereotypes and prejudice exist between the various ethnic groups in Burundi. It is commonly a question of opinions and feelings; individual or collective, fixed ideas and caricatures that one group holds about another. These views include the use of simplistic, rigid clichés to describe a group without dependable prior checks or a sound basis for these views. Most often, these stereotypes and prejudices are unfavourable and pejorative (negative) and are imposed by the background. They can be discriminatory if they are used to pass judgement (distorted by prejudice), when responding to another person or making a decision about them.

Three groups were highlighted by the survey: the way one behaves, relations between ethnic communities and how each ethnic community sees itself.

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[16] According to Jean-Noël Kapférer, several factors lead us to trust a source, and believe it: The credence we give to the source and their expertise, their objectivity, reliability, energy, attractiveness – taken from *Rumeurs, le plus vieux média du monde,* ibidem.
[17] Iyo ikiza kitaguhitanye kiraguhitaniza.

a) What the Tutsi say about the Hutu and about themselves

Tutsi stereotypes and prejudice about Hutus are found in sayings and proverbs, which present the Hutu as lacking intelligence and delicacy although their physical strength is recognised. These sayings and proverbs abound. The Hutu come across as lacking judgement, greedy, blunt, rough, lacking refinement, prying, impolite and vulgar. Although their physical prowess is recognised, it is in stark contrast to their ability to govern. A toad has never been known to climb on a cow or on a house *(ntaho igikere curiye inka canke inzu)*, so a Hutu is better for manual work rather than for government.

As for Tutsi-Hutu relations, prejudice and stereotypes reveal suspicion. Prejudice and stereotypes revolve around the ingratitude shown by Hutu: if you take care of his eye, he'll use it to harm you the next day; if you remove his swelling, the next day he'll want to race you, *(umukura imvunja bwaca ngo ingo twiruke);* if you give him an ear, he'll take all your head; if you invite him home, he'll take your house, etc.

The Tutsi have developed their own prejudice and stereotypes about themselves. Of course most of the stereotypes show the Tutsi in a positive light. Tutsis see in themselves qualities such as courage, intelligence, refinement and politeness. They consider themselves superior to the Hutus. (Even a good-for-nothing Tutsi thinks of himself as worth five Hutus), more handsome (tall, thin and pointed nose) with a natural aptitude for government *(iteka aho ryamye)*.

b) What the Hutu say about the Tutsi

The Hutu hold negative stereotypes on the Tutsi. For the Hutu, Tutsis are malicious and bear grudges. They are lazy, work-shy and physically weak. Tutsis like women *(bakunda abagore)*.

In similar fashion the stereotypes and prejudice on Hutu-Tutsi relations reveal suspicion. Here are the main points alluded to in sayings and proverbs: Tutsi ingratitude and spite. Tutsis exploit you despite the flattery. They are sly and dangerous and akin to snakes *(inzoka)* and bees *(inzuki)*, but also cockroaches *(inyenzi)*: this is probably an allusion to the name formerly given to rebel Tutsis from Rwanda and extended to include all Tutsi Rwandan refugees. They are said to be mischievous, which expresses the intelligence they deploy in their lies.

A pejorative, recent viewpoint held by Hutu, describes the Tutsi as *'abagamba',* associated with those originating from the region of Mugamba, where former Tutsi dignitaries came from. The Hutu see the Tutsi as haughty, proud and arrogant *(amanyama)*, lazy and used to being served. Tutsis think they are right and think they are handsome. Hutu stereotypes about themselves are basically linked to their physical prowess that they impute to their diet.

c) What the Hutu and the Tutsi say about the Twa

Discrimination against the Twa ethnic group abounds in stereotypes. In particular the Twa are said to be inferior and not worthy of sharing a meal with a Hutu or a Tutsi. They are said to dirty hence they smell, *(baranuka)*, and have no discretion whatsoever. If you tell them something, the night has not yet passed and they have already started to tell it to someone [18].

d) Stereotypes and prejudice based on regions

Stereotypes and prejudice based on one's origins are justified by political motivations, mainly linked to the sectarian interests of certain individuals, such as keeping others from power, increasing one's own prestige while devaluing that of others, seeking benefits for such and such

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[18] On this topic, a famous anecdote recounts how a man (non -Twa) went to woo a beautiful Twa woman; the man wondered whether she would reveal to others that they had made love. The woman replied, 'I've already made love to the Prince of the Region but nobody knows'.

a group at the expense of another, monopolising power while brushing others aside and poor governance. These stereotypes function and operate in the same way as stereotypes based on ethnic groups.

For example, a pejorative expression for the 'Great North' (Grand Nord) appeared some time ago to stigmatize and poke fun at the solidarity shown between people from provinces in the north of the country[19], which was seen in a bad light. Stereotypes and prejudice are attached to regions depending on, supposed or otherwise, diet, behaviour and attitudes etc.

For example any Tutsi who settles or resides in a province different from his homeland, for whatever reason, is qualified as *'umugamba, umunyaruguru'.* More recently civil servants were called *'abasawuza',* a name originally given to South African forces that were part of the United Nations Operations in Burundi (UNOB[20]). Some stereotypes are attached to a particular province. People originating from the province of Bururi are accused of being selfish, disdainful and full of themselves while those from Mwaro are perceived as tight-fisted and miserly. These two provinces collected the most unfavourable stereotypes and prejudices.

Stereotypes and prejudice between Burundians and Rwandans

More or less everywhere in the world, given their historical and geographical proximity, neighbouring populations weave links that are underpinned by stereotypes and prejudice, depending on the nature of the relations they have had during the course of history.

a) Burundians' opinion on Rwandans

Most of the stereotypes and prejudice held by Burundians towards Rwandans are negative and unfavourable. They are seen as pretentious, taking themselves to be more intelligent than they are. They are seen as haughty and disdainful. They bear grudges, are thin-skinned, loud, quarrelsome, like to assert themselves, and lose their temper easily. They are said to be nasty and unscrupulous. They like money too much and are dishonest in business. Add to this their alleged ingratitude and that they are considered to be scheming and profiteers, the net result of all these stereotypes and prejudices is that they are difficult to live with and its better to be wary of them.

Nevertheless, there are some positive stereotypes. Rwandans are said to show solidarity among themselves, to be elegant, they like their culture, are hard working, courageous and brave in battle. It is said they are receptive to culture.

There are a certain number of negative stereotypes particularly attached to Rwandan women and girls. They are said to be money grabbing and it is insinuated that they are capable of giving themselves for money. They are seen to be flirts who know how to seduce men and don't hide their feelings like women from Burundi. Domineering, they behave badly, and have a tendency to divorce easily and steal other people's husbands.

Lastly Burundians feel aggrieved that Rwandans think that the whole world revolves around them. This is partly due to the saying that God may spend his day elsewhere but the night he inevitably spends in Rwanda[21].

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19 At the time when all the natives from the South of the country controlled the machinery of the state, and ridiculed those who tried to bring about solidarity, which appeared pointless compared to their power. This expression spread about around 1985-1986, when natives of Ngozi Provice launched initiatives to develop their province (building hotels, a university, a development bank etc.)
20 United Nations Operation in Burundi with a substantial South American force.
21 *Imana yirirwa ahandi igataha i Rwanda.*

b) What Rwandans say about Burundians

The Rwandans interviewed were all domiciled in Burundi and hence their criticism of Burundians was tempered. Nevertheless a couple of clichés came out. The Rwandans interviewed thought that Burundians were not intelligent, that they were fickle and nasty. Burundians were said to suspicious of Rwandans and selfish.

Stereotypes and prejudice towards the Congolese

The survey enabled a substantial number of stereotypes and prejudice to be noted concerning the Congolese in general and the Banyamulenge in particular.

a) Burundian views on the Congolese

Whereas most of the stereotypes and prejudice given were negative, some positive aspects were pointed out. The majority of people interviewed saw the Congolese as dishonest. They were frequently characterised as crooks, forgers, liars and cheats. They are said to be strange, not very courageous, naïve, not very hard working, fickle and not very serious, boastful, hot-headed chatterboxes. Most of the interviewees thought that they were obsessed with sex and often polygamous. In their human relationships, the Congolese can't keep a secret, don't honour their commitments, don't have good manners and are vulgar.

Some positive prejudice exists however, and their qualities include open-mindedness, the ease with which they make contacts and their resourcefulness. They are also said not to hold grudges, and to be well dressed and elegant, but in passing fun was poked at the way they dress (the way they wear their trousers for example). They are applauded for their love of music and the good life. They make good husbands (in that they respect their wives).

b) Burundian views on the Banyamulenge

Certain stereotypes and prejudices were particularly imputed to the Banyamulenge, cited as overly ethno-centric, segregationalist, introverted and contemptuous towards the Hutu. They claim to be noble *(imfura)* and they won't marry daughters of Hutus. In the same vein they are said to be disrespectful, haughty and proud, and fond of the easy life.

c) How the Congolese see the Burundians

Most Congolese stereotypes about the Burundians are negative. The Burundians are seen as dangerous, hard, closed, bitter, hypocritical (always ready to show their best side) and inscrutable (hard to get to know). The Kirundi adage that says only those who don't know a Burundian well would give him hospitality, was reiterated more than once and the Congolese said that they had the bitter experience of this every day. The Congolese have a negative perception of women from Burundi and find them suspicious. The women were thought to be unfaithful.

Players implicated in the spread and perpetuation of stereotypes and prejudice

In Burundi, politicians and the intellectual and financial elite were pinpointed. They are accused of benefitting from the divisions that they cause. They use their political parties to mobilise the electorate in order to seize power. Some political parties have ethnic division on their political agenda.

Overall, irrespective of whether it concerns the Burundians, the Rwandans, or the Congolese, the common denominator for these actors is their own personal interest that can be furthered by bad relations amongst the communities. Essentially it concerns politicians, xenophobes or those ignorant of Congolese or Rwandan culture.

Other people or groups considered as xenophobic (Burundi, Rwandan, or Congolese), as well as some political and administrative entities, were cited as having 'an aversion towards the other group'. There were also groups who had had differences with people or groups from the other nationalities or groups, persons who had a negative experience (due to commercial, real estate or individual dealings etc.) with the other nationality. However, those who are convinced of their soundness and timelessness also spread stereotypes and prejudices in a casual manner. These persons may be parents who repeat stereotypes and prejudices to their children, ordinary conversations between friends peppered with jokes and wisecracks.

The credit lent to stereotypes and prejudices

Opinions on this topic were very divided. On both sides there are people who concede that they attach some importance while others declare that they don't believe a word of what they hear because it is devoid of all objectivity. Arguments were put forward to defend each position.

In all, the people interviewed hesitated to express their opinion on stereotypes and prejudices based on ethnicity and regional origins. Many of the people interviewed preferred to put the onus on others: politicians, political parties, the educated elite etc. During the interviews and the discussions there was tangible embarrassment, shown by gaps and hesitations, in the way opinions were expressed or answers given. Irrespective of nationality, some interviewees declared that no importance should be attached to stereotypes and prejudices because everyone recognises their own ethnic group as well as their regional origins and nationality[22].

Others held the view that, on the contrary, a great deal of importance was attached to stereotypes and prejudices, and that this was how relations in society were regulated. They justified this viewpoint by the fact that after having heard them so much, they end up believing the rumours and stereotypes, and integrating them into their way of life. Proof of this lies with examples of social ghettoization between people of differing nationalities or ethnic groups. They went on to say that examples of this appear in day-to-day behaviour, citing suspicion, refusal of mixed marriage, tension and discrimination.

Consequences of stereotypes and prejudices

The harmful and destructive effects of stereotyping and prejudice have been recognised as numerous, varied, diversified and having ramifications in many domains. There are clear consequences on human rights. Stereotypes and prejudice largely underpin the discriminatory practices observed. This is echoed in people's lives, education, their self-respect and employment. Intercommunity relations (at ethnic and national levels) are significantly impeded by stereotypes and prejudice.

Ethnic stereotypes and prejudice can lead to attitudes and behaviour that degrade community relations notably resulting in slaughter, collective hatred directed at the members of a group as a whole, suspicion, permanent mistrust, refusal (a ban on) mixed ethnic marriages, resulting in

22 These reserves could be linked to the recent political evolution in the country whereby the political party in office refuses the quota policy and rather proclaims its attachment to national unity. They want to make a sort of taboo out of the issue, it would seem.

social and geographical ghettoization. Stereotypes and prejudice represent a serious handicap for the political, democratic, economic and social development of a country, because the country sees its potential clipped due to ethnic and regional considerations. The democratic development of a country becomes difficult because political programmes and social projects are missing. Subjective criteria are used that prevent the country from using its skills rationally; with the result, for example that infrastructure is destroyed in the meantime.

In the case of relations between two countries, a climate of tension and insecurity sets in that prevents the free circulation of goods and men, gradually leading to deterioration in communications and cooperation between the state or frontier authorities. All of this may work towards an increase in the risk of conflict.

IV Proposals to reduce rumours, stereotypes and prejudice

The proposals put forward are essentially based on an educative approach. Educational awareness should be carried out from as early an age as possible and supported by good communication.

At a national level, the recommendations put forward to reduce rumours advocate the promotion of good governance practices since a direct link has been established between the start and spreading of rumours and bad governance. Honesty, transparency, government for all, reconciliation between communities, investment in the struggle against poverty are to be promoted while ethnic and regional clientelism must be avoided. The recommendations for reducing stereotypes and prejudice are more or less similar. In addition, leaders are urged to promote the common good and fight ignorance through universal education and promoting functional literacy among adults as barriers against manipulation.

With regard to relations between the country and its people, general measures of good government are advocated between countries and populations. Above all it is a question of bringing peace to the region as a whole and the setting up of mechanisms to manage conflict by organising regular meetings at the highest levels of State power. It is also about rapid responses to border disputes, the fight against impunity for serious crimes, and keeping the populations of the various countries correctly informed.

The main steps advocated are:

a) Education on the ravages of stereotypes and prejudices and the benefits that can be gleaned from peaceful co-existence;

b) Promotion of human rights and the principles of equality and non-discrimination;

c) The promotion of good relations and cooperation between the countries;

d) Respect for the culture of others and non interference in their affairs;

e) Value placed on the different customs and practices of each people, and respect for their differences (complementarity);

f) Poverty and discrimination are fought and equity in the sharing of resources is promoted;

g) Encourage cooperation, cultural and commercial exchanges between countries and sub-regions by introducing measures that favour the free circulation of goods and persons.

Obviously, all the players involved–namely the political and administrative authorities of both countries, national, regional and sub-regional associations, religious leaders, decision-makers, the education system, etc. must make a joint effort to implement these measures.

8

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