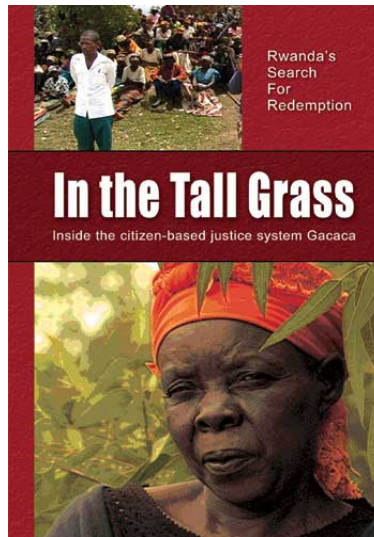




In the Tall Grass

Guidebook



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Rwanda



Nationality: noun: Rwandan(s)
adjective: Rwandan

Country name: conventional long form: Republic of Rwanda
conventional short form: Rwanda
local long form: Republika y'u Rwanda
local short form: Rwanda
former: Ruanda, German East Africa

Location: Central Africa, east of Democratic Republic of the Congo

Area: 26,338 sq km (10,169 sq miles)

Population: 8,648,248 (2002)

Population Density: 314.1 per sq km. Rwanda is the most densely populated country in Africa

Ethnic groups: Hutu 84%, Tutsi 15%, Twa (Pygmoid) 1%

Language: The official languages are Kinyarwanda, French and English. Kiswahili is used for trade and commerce.

Religion: Animist (50 per cent), Christian (mostly Roman Catholic) and an Islamic minority.

Literacy: definition: age 15 and over can read and write
total population: 70.4%
male: 76.3%
female: 64.7% (2003 est.)

Capital: Kigali, population: 233,640 (1991).

Area - comparative: slightly smaller than Maryland

Border countries: Burundi, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Tanzania, Uganda

Geography: Rwanda is a small, land locked country in eastern / central Africa. It has five volcanoes and 23 lakes as well as several rivers. A large part of the country has an elevation of between 1,500 and 2,500 meters.

In prehistoric times as much as one third of Rwanda was covered with mountain rainforest. Today the only large tract of forest left in Rwanda is Nyungwe in the southwestern part of the country; it covers almost 1000 square kilometers. Some areas of forest are also found in the Volcanoes National Park in the northeast, but most of the natural vegetation here is bamboo forest and open moorland.

The highlands in large parts of the country are now dominated by the terraced agriculture that gives the Rwandan countryside its beautiful and pleasant character. The eastern part of Rwanda has entirely different vegetation, the typical African bush, a mix of savannah and grassland dominated by acacia trees as well as large tracts of marshlands and swamps. The Virunga volcanoes, rising steeply from Lake Kivu in the west, slope down first to a hilly central plateau and further eastwards to an area of marshy lakes around the upper reaches of the A'Kagera River, where the A'Kagera National Park is situated.

Geography - note: landlocked; most of the country is savanna grassland with the population predominantly rural

Government type: republic; presidential, multiparty system

Government: Republic since 1962. Gained independence from Belgium in 1962.

Head of State: President Paul Kagame since 2000.

Head of Government: Prime Minister Bernard Makuza since 2000.

Suffrage: 18 years of age; universal adult

Labor force - by occupation: agriculture: 90% industry and services: 10%

Population below poverty line: 60% (2001 est.)

Agriculture - products: coffee, tea, pyrethrum (insecticide made from chrysanthemums), bananas, beans, sorghum, potatoes; livestock

Industries: cement, agricultural products, small-scale beverages, soap, furniture, shoes, plastic goods, textiles, cigarettes

Economy - overview: Rwanda is a poor rural country with about 90% of the population engaged in (mainly subsistence) agriculture. It is the most densely populated country in Africa and is landlocked with few natural resources and minimal industry. Primary foreign exchange earners are coffee and tea. The 1994 genocide decimated Rwanda's fragile economic base, severely impoverished the population, particularly women, and eroded the country's ability to attract private and external investment. However, Rwanda has made substantial progress in stabilizing and rehabilitating its economy to pre-1994 levels, although poverty levels are higher now.

Background: In 1959, three years before independence from Belgium, the majority ethnic group, the Hutus, overthrew the ruling Tutsi king. Over the next several years, thousands of Tutsis were killed, and some 150,000 driven into exile in neighboring countries. The children of these exiles later formed a rebel group, the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF), and began a civil war in 1990. The war, along with several political and economic upheavals, exacerbated ethnic tensions, culminating in April 1994 in the genocide of roughly 800,000 Tutsis and moderate Hutus. The Tutsi rebels defeated the Hutu regime and ended the killing in July 1994, but approximately 2 million Hutu refugees - many fearing Tutsi retribution - fled to neighboring Burundi, Tanzania, Uganda, and the former Zaire. Since then, most of the refugees have returned to Rwanda, but about 10,000 remain in neighboring Democratic Republic of the Congo and have formed an extremist insurgency bent on retaking Rwanda, much as the RPF tried in 1990. Despite substantial international assistance and political reforms - including Rwanda's first local elections in March 1999 and its first post-genocide presidential and legislative elections in August and September 2003 - the country continues to struggle to boost investment and agricultural output, and ethnic reconciliation is complicated by the real and perceived Tutsi political dominance. Kigali's increasing centralization and intolerance of dissent, the nagging Hutu extremist insurgency across the border, and Rwandan involvement in two wars in recent years in the neighboring Democratic Republic of the Congo continue to hinder Rwanda's efforts to escape its bloody legacy.

What Happens During a Gacaca Trial?

A **Gacaca President** presides over a gacaca session / trial .One of the gacaca Secretaries takes note of each day's proceedings .All the 9 members of gacaca seat act as a jury, following all the proceedings and determining a suspect's guilt.



The President and the Members of the Gacaca Jury

The president begins by announcing each case and introducing the suspect to the audience, stating his name, residence, and the accusations against him. If the suspect wishes to confess his crimes, the president asks him publicly all relevant details .The president then asks the gathered audience to reflect on the suspect's confession and give their points of view in regard to the truth of the confession.

The suspect is allowed to modify his confession if he appears honestly to have forgotten some other detail .The jury then goes in camera to deliberate on the confession and judge weather it is full and complete .If the jury decides and finds the confession correct, it can grant the defendant a reduced penalty.

If the suspect pleads his innocence, the President asks those in attendance and the state prosecutor to testify either for or against the suspect .The hearing takes place in a deliberative manner and lawyers are prohibited in taking part in the proceedings.

After the public hearing, the seat of gacaca goes in camera to determine the suspect's guilt. The determination of guilt and penalty, in a gacaca hearing is determined through majority consensus.

Gacaca Judges

Rwanda elected gacaca judges in October 2001, in elections that were largely described as free and fair .The gacaca law urged Rwandans to select *inyangamugayo*, as judges.



Gacaca Judges, also called Inyangamugayo

Members of certain professional organizations are excluded from serving on gacaca seats or from being elected to the general assemblies of gacaca .These include government employees, police, soldiers, judges etc.

Gacaca- time frame and the cost

The Rwanda government estimates that gacaca will take between 3- 5 years .Earlier experiments show that gacaca could take more than the expected time frame.

In terms of funding, government is slated to inject in an initial 5 billion Rwanda francs, over the course of the gacaca process, in 2001, 2 billion is what was allocated to gacaca from government.

Role of the public in Gacaca

Researches done so far indicate that most Rwandans support Gacaca as a form of addressing the immense problem of justice. According to Peter E, Harrell, in his Thesis, Rwanda's Gamble, 87 percent of Rwandans are willing to testify in a gacaca session.

Source – www.rwandagateway.org

Discussion Questions:

1. Although the gacaca system of justice has been praised by many for its ability to allow a community to settle its differences, some argue that it is not effective enough to administer justice in the modern era. Discuss the pros and cons of this form of justice. Does gacaca provide enough protections and rights for those accused? Should those who run the trials have some legal training? What checks and balances are in place to allow a fair trial for both parties?
2. Gacaca is an age-old form of justice found in Rwanda. Other societies/countries have similar forms of community justice. Research these and discuss how they are similar and how they are different to gacaca. Are they more effective? Less effective?
3. Compare the gacaca trials in Rwanda to the truth and reconciliation trials/meetings that were held in South Africa to deal with the crimes committed during the apartheid era. What lasting benefits did South Africa experience from their process and do you think Rwanda will experience the same? Can these types of community/national reconciliations leave out certain groups/causes that a more formal judicial process would better handle and vice versa?
4. At the end of the film, Joanita is able to bury the remains of her children, but the man accused of the crime shows no remorse or admits any wrongdoing, even though the gacaca found him guilty. Do you feel Joanita found justice through gacaca? Or do you feel that the process, which relies more on personal testimony than actual evidence, is not effective enough.
5. What are the lessons learned from watching Joanita's story play out in the gacaca process? If faced with a similar situation, would you agree to do what she did or go through the regular court process?