

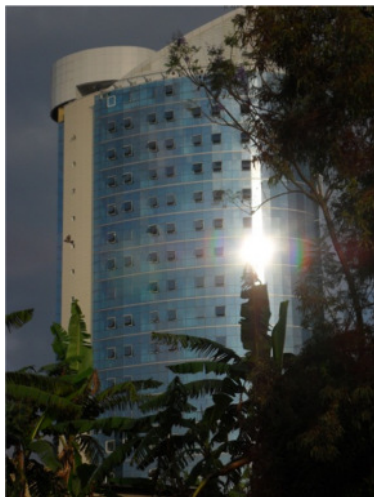
Report on the
field visit of
the Coordinator of the OENZ
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to Rwanda

March 2011

Economic growth in Kigali

Since my last visit in April 2010, Kigali has again changed its appearance. Many more areas have been cleared in the city centre, leaving large empty space for investment. The Kigali City Tower at the place of the former African market has been almost completed. The city centre seems busy with banks, pharmacies, travel agencies, and a well-dressed clientele enjoys the new middle class shopping possibilities. Signs of poverty have been radically evicted from the city centre. Not a single beggar² or street child was to be seen.

A series of new buildings are in the rise, all of them have to be higher than four stores now and house- and shop owners complain that they are forced to sell and destroy their one- and two store houses, making place for new buildings where they then have to rent new facilities at enormous prices. Apparently most of the new buildings are owned by RPF officials or businesses close to the government. Yet still at least 90 % of the areas in the new central business district, which should be the heart of the national boost in development according to the Kigali City Conceptual Masterplan are empty and show no sign of imminent investment.



Kigali City Tower



recently cleared areas in the city centre

Photos Ilona Auer-Frege

Where thousands of local poor inhabitants have been evicted in the last three years and been forced to leave the city centre without adequate – or any – compensation, the envisaged capital motor for national development still fails to work. The landlocked location of Rwanda with long transportation ways to international markets, a lack of natural resources and the weakness of regional business and markets make it even more difficult to spark off a local boom. Multiplying projects like the new congress centre that will host up to 6.000 visitors (designed by German architects), a new tourist board and growing hotel facilities help to create an atmosphere of modernity, openness and a link to international science, business and cultural exchange. But while banks, telecommunication systems and the new stock exchange have created some kind of growth, these new business opportunities hardly develop any outreach to the rural areas. There unemployment, growing overpopulation, a lack of farmland and business opportunities prevail, poverty and even hunger within the population has not reduced significantly.

Political instability

Although the government has been re-elected by more than 95% of the voters in August 2010, an air of instability and concern for security prevails. Even after the elections, the series of grenade attacks in Kigali and other cities has continued, so far leaving dozens of people killed and many wounded. To overcome terrorist attacks, the government now displays its force by sending out massive army and police patrols daily after 16.00h and during the night, nationwide. Still this has failed to stop the attacks or produce evidence against the responsible groups. Even after dozens of suspects have been arrested and accused of conspiracy with FDLR or oppositional groups, the violence continues. The attacks are hardly mentioned in the media, which are almost all under governmental control.

Since all oppositional parties like the UDF, the Socialist Imberakuri or the Green Party have been blocked or even destroyed and their leaders been driven into exile (Frank Habineza, Green Party in Sweden) or sent to prison (Victoire Ingabire, UDF, Bernard Ntaganda, Socialist Imberakuri, Mr. Deo Mushayidi, leader of PDP Imanzi and Mr. Charles Ntakirutinka, leader of PDR Ubuyanja) before the elections, the Rwandan Government now has to face internal divisions. The formerly monolithic core of the RPF is showing signs of disintegration. Leading figures of the army and RPF like Faustin Kayumba Nyamwasa and Patrick Karegeya have sought refuge in exile and started to challenge President Kagame openly. With their biography of being part of the Uganda-raised group of exiled Rwandans who participated in the invasion war since 1992 and during the 1994 genocide, they had a very close link to President Kagame and were also involved in many military operations since the Congo wars. Their knowledge about these historical events and the Rwandan involvement in political movements and probably also in serious human rights violations makes them powerful enemies to the regime. As leading army officers, they have trained and influenced a whole generation of commanders, who are now in crucial positions. It seems as if Kayumba and Karegeya still enjoy the trust and support of a number of influential politicians, former colleagues and officers. Especially Karegeyas lead at the so called "Congo Desk" of the defence ministry, which was responsible for military and economical interventions in the Kivu region, has earned him important relations that are still valid. The attempt to kill him in 2010 in Johannesburg, which is still strongly denied by the Rwandan government, has also burdened the Rwandan relations to the South African government, who was outraged by this crime on their territory.

Where the grip of President Kagame on the national army and government sees challenges, he also faces a loss of support by his external allies. The CNDP-forces, who have been under ruling influence of the RPF for over 10 years have, after the arrest of their leader Laurent Nkunda and their official integration into the Congolese national army, distanced themselves from the Kigali regime. Bosco Ntaganda as their new leader seems to be far less influential in the CNDP and also hesitant to accept Rwandan orders. CNDP troop commanders seem to have increased their own regime and act more according to their own agenda, reducing Rwandas sphere of influence in the DR Congo. This is very unwelcome in the pre-election phase of the neighbour state, where Rwanda traditionally wants to insert its agenda in the political development. CNDP itself seems to be internally fragmented.

OHCHR mapping exercise

The relations to the DR Congo have been even complicated by the publication of the OHCHR paper that meticulously describes atrocities against refugees and the civil population in the time around the 1994 genocide and during the Congo Wars, caused by Rwandan, but also

Ugandan and other armed forces¹. Rwanda was blamed for having committed excessive mass violence and executions of tens of thousands civilians, almost exclusively of Rwandan Hutu descent on the territory of the DR Congo, which was perhaps even close to a genocide. This accusation has hurt the Rwandan government at the core of its identity-concept: The RPF has always defined itself as being the saviour of the Rwandan people from the genocide against the Tutsi, in times where the international community completely failed. To be accused of having committed massive atrocities themselves rocked the legitimacy and image of the Rwandan Government towards its own people, but also towards the neighbouring countries, at the bone. The outraged reactions of President Kagame to the publications of the report are evidence for how personally insulted he felt by the allegations of the OHCHR. The severe human rights violations described in the mapping exercise report have always been known to experts in the region and sometimes even been documented. Still that those facts had been researched in detail, testified by hundreds and thousands of eye-witnesses and then published by a UN body that asked for immediate judicial consequences gave the accusations a much higher recognition and lead to a redefinition of many bilateral and multilateral relations between Rwanda and its donor community.

Limited democratic space

Donor support has also been constrained by the reduction of the already limited democratic space for human rights defenders, media, representatives of civil society and of course opposition parties in the pre-election phase. This has increased the perception of a development dictatorship. Even though Rwanda shows strengths in its fight against corruption, in the dedication to education, health care, the empowerment of women and economic development, basic human and social rights are systematically violated. Next to the arrest of oppositional party leaders, in 2011 the two journalists Agnès Uwimana and Saidati Mukakibibi have been convicted to 7 and 17 years in prison on charges of "threatening state security, genocide ideology, divisionism and defamation" after some critical articles against President Kagame. The journalist Jean-Léonard Rugabage has been shot dead outside his home on 24 June 2010.

Human Rights defender Pascal Niyilibakwe of the League des Droits de l'Homme dans la Région des Grands Lacs LDGL had to flee into exile in November 2010, as he received serious threats after a human rights report sent to the OHCHR who had called for papers on the upcoming UPR on Rwanda.

All NGOs and human rights groups are forced to become members of a national civil society platform which has a structure of strict governmental control.

Economic gap between urban and rural population

National programmes to increase and restructure the economy have not been well perceived by the population, which feels dominated by insensitive and rigid production schemes. Especially the attempted "green revolution" of the agricultural sector, which promotes co-operational farming and the cultivation of cash crops instead of subsistence farming, has caused unemployment. Small scale family farms were forced to team up in

¹ DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO, 1993–2003, Report of the Mapping Exercise documenting the most serious violations of human rights and international humanitarian law committed within the territory of the Democratic Republic of the Congo between March 1993 and June 2003 August 2010, OHCHR 1 Oct 2010.

cooperatives, and regional and local production plans give detailed instructions on which crops to plant on every single field. Farmers feel that their traditional knowledge on agriculture is neglected, and that the production of cash crops like corn or pyrethrum leaves them, after they sell the products to low market prices, with less income and food than before by subsistence farming. Bundling fields for monoculture production and the use of more technical methods of farming also increased unemployment and separated farmers from the land that they have worked on for generations.



Rice plantation near Butare

Photo Ilona Auer-Frege

Overall, the destruction of low-cost urban settlements and the restructuring of the agricultural sector which used to feed up to 95% of the population, has increased the gap between an emerging, but very small middle class and elite population in Kigali and some towns, and the majority of rural population, who feels increasingly underprivileged and dominated by rigid governmental policies.

Some conflict potential also lies in the growing number of youth that search for economic opportunities in the cities. Recently the government is trying to promote family planning more rigidly², but still the average women has more than 4 children, which has led to a population growth of more than 5% p.a. As more than 40% of all Rwandans are younger than 14 years, the massive investments in the education system during the recent 15 years leads to a growing number of well-educated and internationally oriented young students who find no adequate employment, but can also not be absorbed by the traditional farming of their families any more. This group of well-trained but unemployed youth might develop a high potential of social unrest within society, if the government finds no adequate income generating opportunities for them.

Still the government tries to impose a firm grip on society, and institutions like the Ingando / Intorero camps for political education are used to instil a common belief in the government,

² On 30 January 2011, Dr Richard Sezibera, Rwandan Minister of Health, declared that the government had set the objective of sterilising a minimum of 700.000 men within two years as part of a programme to limit births. This idea has caused enormous national and international controversy.

unity and future development. Ministries design development schemes that are then implemented nationwide with high efficiency, but often not adapted to the special needs of different target areas or vulnerable groups. For instance the plan to improve housing and to replace straw thatched huts by more solid housing was realized in February 2011 by simply burning down hundreds homes of poor families, leaving them homeless. This was an act of inappropriate obedience by local mayors, who wanted to fulfil ministry orders in disregards of basic human rights, being afraid of punishments if they do not achieve the newest development orders in their communes.

These acts, combined with insensitive agricultural reform, resettlements, a one-party-system that does not allow opposition, military dominance in business and society and the oppression of media and human rights groups have led to a growing distance between population and government, a feeling of non-representation, injustice and a lack of future opportunities, that might become critical for the ruling system in the near future.