PEACE-BUILDING THROUGH SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN POST-GENOCIDE RWANDA: THE CASE OF PEACE BASKET COOPERATIVE

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Abstract
The concept of social entrepreneurship is discussed in the context of post-genocide Rwanda, in which survivors and perpetrators of genocide lived side by side after the genocide in 1994. It is herein argued that in order to build sustainable peace in a post-conflict society it is of fundamental importance to address issues of contention that give rise to conflict between groups and individuals in communities, such as natural resources, political influence or issues of cultural identity. To achieve an understanding of intra-state conflicts, it is important to address the ways in which people relate to one another, structurally, relationally, culturally and politically. Intragroup relations between Hutu and Tutsi are briefly explained with reference to colonial history, which contributed to the cementation of power structure and inequalities between Hutu and Tutsi. Bottom-up approaches to peace-building should promote conflict transformation and involve communities in identifying ways of solving problems non-violently. In post-genocide Rwanda social entrepreneurship and cooperative work significantly contribute in poverty alleviation. In the lack of access to land, credit or employment widows, orphans and other genocide survivors are highly vulnerable of insecurity in terms of food and income. Peace basket cooperative utilises Rwandan traditional knowledge of basket weaving as a means of income generation for its members. Interpersonal contact beneficial to both parties fosters cooperation and positive communication. The cooperative is based upon the principles of equality, solidarity and unity, which ensures mutual support and creates a common ground to build trust. Cooperative members express their mutual support among members and have established relations on the basis of new trust, as a result of truth telling and reconciliation. Peace basket is recognized by members as not only a means of income generation, but also functioning as education for survivors and former perpetrators of genocide in teaching them how to live and communicate with one another.

Keywords: peace-building, genocide, Peace basket, Rwanda, cooperatives, conflict transformation.

Introduction
Social entrepreneurship is widely acknowledged as a means to solving social and environmental problems, such as poverty alleviation in marginalised communities. In post-conflict societies local communities struggle to subsist due to their loss of resources and human lives, as well as internal conflict between groups. This paper will discuss the practice of social entrepreneurship as a means of peace-building in post-genocide Rwanda. During the genocide in 1994 between 800,000 and 1,000,000 people lost their lives and left the surviving population traumatised. The case of study Peace basket cooperative in Rwanda is an example of social entrepreneurship in which one individual established a business as a means of income generation, and has contributed to poverty alleviation among cooperative members. Referring to a doctoral thesis from 2009 on the role of cooperatives in the restoration of interpersonal relationships in Rwanda this paper will argue how social entrepreneurship also may contribute in building sustainable peace.

What is Social Entrepreneurship?
Social entrepreneurship is an approach to addressing social problems, such as poverty, unemployment, and lack of care for orphans or the elderly. Through capacity building and skills building in local communities, participation and cooperation are means to an end to achieve community and individual empowerment. While entrepreneurs are driven by profiting, social entrepreneurs are motivated to improve society. In areas such as education, health, income generation and agriculture social entrepreneurship is contributing to social and economic development. In doing so, individuals and networks implement innovative methods and creativity, taking advantage of circumstances in which others see merely social problems. Moreover, social entrepreneurship aims to achieve “change in social and cultural arrangements via participative structures and democratic processes”. Hence, social entrepreneurs view social, political and cultural structures and norms in society as contributing to the oppressed or underprivileged position of vulnerable and marginalized groups. Through participatory approaches they address aspects of inequalities and disparities in an effort to alter structures of power for the benefit of the underprivileged.

Although social entrepreneurship engages in social issues on the basic principles of equality and self-help, it is an inherently political act. As it encourages conscientisation of underlying social and political issues that maintain disparities and inequalities in society, social entrepreneurs act as “change agents for society”. The approach is based upon democratic processes, allowing voices to be heard that previously have not had arenas to speak their opinions. A fundamental goal is to help solve pertinent social problems non-violently in order to achieve sustainable peace. Similarly, in African societies people have traditionally worked collectively to meet social and economic needs. Nowadays the cooperative movement is a significant driving force in helping the most marginalized groups and communities in society. The International Co-operative Alliance, established in 1895, states that the basic values of cooperatives are honesty, openness, social responsibility and caring for others. The ICA defines a cooperative as:

“An autonomous association of persons united voluntarily to meet their common economic, social, and cultural needs and aspirations through a jointly-owned and democratically-controlled enterprise.”

The basic principles are guidelines by which cooperatives should work to achieve their goals, stated as self-help, self-responsibility, democracy, equality, equity and solidarity. In working to alleviate social and economic needs, the means to achieve such ends will necessitate cooperation and collaboration on non-racial grounds. According to the ILO, the role of cooperatives is threefold in addressing economic, social and political issues. At least seven people out of 100 Africans are members of cooperatives. In Africa the cooperative movement did not initially emerge as a response to economic and social conditions as they did in Europe. It was rather a strategy of the colonial administration aiming at economic profits. Under state control many cooperatives gave preferential treatment and benefits to members, using cooperatives for political ends, for instance through job opportunities for political supporters. As a result, the principles of voluntary membership and democratic control were forced to give way for the protection of one self.

The link between Social Entrepreneurship and peace-building

A basic principle of social entrepreneurship is participation in democratic processes among its stakeholders. In order to help vulnerable communities and individuals it is essential to ensure their opportunities to participate in decision making that affect their own lives. In addressing issues that lead to social injustice and inequities one must consider the structural causes in the social, economic and political dimensions in society.

Johan Galtung originally coined the term “peace-building” in 1975 in his ground-breaking work *Three Approaches to Peace: Peacemaking, Peacekeeping and Peacebuilding*. He argues that in order to achieve a sustainable peace it is essential to address the structural and systemic causes of violence and conflict. For instance, in patriarchal societies he argues that it is essential to fight patriarchal norms and values. The approach is based upon democratic principles and values. As a result, a more equitable power-sharing basis will benefit both women and men. The focus in peace-building should be on humans and the social setting surrounding them. In order to build peace within a community one must consider the ways in which people relate to one another. An inclusive society must give space to both “Self” and “Other” to achieve sustainable peace. Galtung suggests defining peace as “nonviolent and creative conflict transformation.”

Similarly, John Paul Lederach (Wright, 2004, [John Paul Lederach: A Peacebuilder Bibliography](https://www.peacebuilder.info/)) focuses on constructive approaches to conflict. He defines the term conflict transformation as “life-giving opportunities for creating constructive change processes that reduce violence, increase justice in direct interaction and social structures and respond to real-life problems in human relationships”. The purpose of this approach to conflict is to achieve “personal, relational, structural and cultural changes”. While conflict resolution aims to solve situations of conflict by examining the positions and interests of the conflicting parties, the objective of conflict transformation is to change the relational pattern between the parties. Thus, Lederach also views the social and political structure of a society in conflict as an underlying

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4 The International Cooperative Alliance, *Co-operative identity, principles and values*.
11 Wright, John Paul Lederach: A Peacebuilder Bibliography.
12 Wright, John Paul Lederach.
13 Wright, John Paul Lederach.
cause of violence and repression. Conflict transformation signifies altering factors in society which lead to inequality, socio-economic disparities and human rights abuses.

Most conflicts today are intrastate, involving two or more conflicting parties within a sovereign state. Many stem from diverging interests and power struggles concerning rights, economic advantage, natural resources and cultural identity. Processes of building sustainable peace necessitate addressing such underlying causes that give rise to conflicts between communities.

There are different approaches to peace-building. Top down peace-building involves the political leadership in the government and national authorities, NGOs and often, UN organisations. The local population, although living in the midst of the conflict, are in many cases receivers of aid, but often not viewed as central to the process of peace-building. On the other hand, bottom up perspective on peace-building views grassroots movements and community based organizations (CBOs) as partners in the process. From this point of view it is argued that the local population must participate in peace-building initiatives as they are living in the midst of the conflict. Essentially, there is a lack of focus on interpersonal relations within the community as well as relations between groups in conflict when local communities are excluded in processes of peace-building. Their experiences of lack of access to markets, food shortages and other aspects of insecurity must be taken into account. In such a context social entrepreneurship promotes and encourages the participation of civil society through cooperative methods and communication, the pooling of resources and physical labour to achieve common goals. In other words, bottom-up perspectives criticise top-down approaches for underestimating the importance of collective and intrapersonal relationships between different communities within one country.

As previously explained, Galtung and Lederach both argue that it is detrimental to address the underlying causes of conflict by considering the economic, political and social structures in society. Where conflict resolution aims to end the violence and conflict that is unwanted, conflict transformation aims to end the violence and also build a new and just structure that is sustainable for all stakeholders. Conflicts are regarded as normal in human relations, and the focus is rather on the ways in which humans relate to one another. Who holds power over which resources? How do people relate to one another? And are different segments in society able to voice their opinions? A conflict involves different approaches of viewing an issue and interests on behalf of two or more parties. In short, it involves attitude (A), behaviour (B) and contradiction (C). (A) signifies the parties’ misperceptions of one another, and (B) their behaviours towards one another. (C) refers to “perceived incompatibilities” among the conflicting parties. The purpose of peace-building is to restructure the nature of relations between the conflicting parties in order to achieve sustainable peace.

Social entrepreneurs adapt a similar approach in their work by addressing underlying causes of the underprivileged position of communities or individuals that they want to help. Their projects are always “social” as they are not aiming at making profits, but by implementing creative ideas and innovative methods they are striving for change in society. In the absence of bureaucracy their entrepreneurial skills are targeted at social transformation for the benefit of the underprivileged or marginalised. Now we will consider the concepts of social entrepreneurship, peace-building and conflict transformation in the context of post-genocide Rwanda.

The relevance of Social Entrepreneurship in Rwanda

The social fabric of The Republic of Rwanda was devastated as a result of the genocide in 1994. The vast majority of the population lost at least one family member. Children were especially vulnerable and approximately 95,000 children, or an estimated 8% of the child population, were orphaned. A large number of parents died during the genocide, while others died later from AIDS or other diseases. Moreover, parents who participated in acts of genocide were imprisoned. Due to the lack of social capital and support 101,000 children were in 2004 heads of households. During the one hundred days of genocide from April to July between 800,000 and 1,000,000 people lost their lives in Rwanda, 300,000 of which were children. The population of Rwanda was left traumatised, with survivors and perpetrators of genocide continuing to live near one another or within the same community.

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15 Gupea, Peacebuilding in Post-Genocide Rwanda, p. 29.
17 Hagengimana, After Genocide in Rwanda: Social and Psychological Consequences.
18 UNICEF, Rwanda: Ten years after the genocide.
19 Cards from Africa, An estimated 8 per cent of Rwanda’s population is orphaned.
20 UNICEF, Rwanda.
21 UNICEF, Rwanda.
Of those who were killed, the majority of the victims were male, leaving ten times as many widows as widowers. While women today account for an estimate of 54% of heads of households due to the loss of, or the imprisonment, of their husbands. As heads of households many women and children are at high risk of poverty, in the lack of access to resources such as land, microcredit and human labour. It is estimated that 24.1% of the population are living in conditions of extreme poverty (10.4% urban and 26.4% rural).

In addition to widespread political violence during the genocide, other factors of violence were social, economic and environmental degradation. The economic infrastructure was devastated, which led to the loss of unemployment, income and capital. Natural resources such as land and cash crops, for instance tea and coffee trees, were destroyed. Workers who depended on access to markets to sell their goods no longer had the necessitated access. Skilled people and academicians were slaughtered or fled abroad, with the intention of eliminating the influence of the Tutsi minority. During the five year period 1990-1994 of the civil war that culminated in the genocide, the GDP of Rwanda plummeted by more than 40%. Ultimately, the deteriorated state of infrastructure led to a rapid increase in poverty and vulnerability for survivors and communities throughout Rwanda.

In order to understand the circumstances of the genocide we need to consider the historical context of the Republic of Rwanda. During the 19th century the population learnt to differentiate between the groups that reside in the country, which became the basis of social capital. As the first Europeans to take control in Rwanda, German colonialists initiated a racist ideology, based upon the assumption that the “generally taller, lighter-skinned Tutsi” were ‘natural’ leaders of the pastoralist Hutus. The distinction between Hutu and Tutsi is predominantly a matter of social class, or occupation. Colonization further entrenched socioeconomic disparities and the distribution of power, in favour of the Tutsi. However, being Hutu or Tutsi has never been static, and group membership has been blurred by intermarriage. Also one could rise or ascend in status, depending on acquired wealth or position in society. For instance, a Hutu who acquired more cattle could be given the status as Tutsi. Statistically, the population comprises of Hutu, approximately 84%, the Tutsi 14% and the Twa 1%. However, these estimates are based upon the number of cows owned, and may not be accurate.

After World War I the Belgians solidified the divide along “ethnic” lines (rather than class) lines. Similarly as the Germans, the Belgian colonialists assumed the Tutsi were of higher ranking, for their physical appearance and for owning cattle. During the 1920s scientists measured the brain skull and height of locals. The Belgians believed to differentiate the Tutsi from Hutu on grounds of their larger brain size, body height and lighter skin tone, viewing them as a relative to the white Caucasian. During the census in 1926 people were forced to choose their “ethnic” identity. A few years later, in 1931, the colonial administration began issuing identity cards, differing between “Tutsi”, “Hutu” and “Twa”. This restructuring of

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22 Survivors Fund, Rwandan history.
23 UNDP, About Rwanda.
24 Colletta and Cullen, The nexus between violent conflict, social capital and social cohesion: Case studies from Cambodia and Rwanda, p. 15.
26 Global Issues, Rwanda.
27 Colletta and Cullen, The nexus between violent conflict, social capital and social cohesion, p. 16.
28 As told to the author in conversation with locals in Rwanda, March-April 2013.
29 The Twa are pottery-making pygmies and account for less than 1% of the population. They have traditionally resided in forest lands, as hunter gatherers, somewhat separately from the majority population.
31 Colletta and Cullen, The nexus between violent conflict, social capital and social cohesion, p. 16.
32 Shah, Rwanda.
33 Colletta and Cullen, The nexus between violent conflict, social capital and social cohesion, p. 16.
ethnicity created the root of the conflict, paving the way towards civil war in 1990, and subsequently, the genocide in 1994.

**The case of Peace basket cooperative**

In the aftermath of the genocide the population of Rwanda existed in polarised communities. The creation of group identification on the grounds of Tutsi, Hutu or Twa ancestry led to the creation of an image of contradicting backgrounds and interests. The official goal of the state-driven genocide in 1994 was to eliminate all Tutsi, which would give exclusive power and domination to Hutu. Hence, relations between the two groups were defined on the grounds of intragroup kinship relations, which meant having to choose sides between Tutsi or Hutu. Secondly, belonging to one group signified the relation to members of the “other” group as enemies. The construction of “the other” created the illusion of an enemy within.

In the aftermath of the genocide the cooperative *Peace basket* was established in July 1997 as a means of income generation for villagers living in conditions of extreme poverty. The majority of the members joined the cooperative to fight against poverty, and secondly, to alleviate one’s loneliness. Communities throughout Rwanda were characterised by severed relations and broken friendships after the genocide. *Peace basket* members of both Tutsi and Hutu kinship conveyed hostile attitudes and lack of communication with the other group in the beginning. There was widespread intergroup fear, anger and hatred. In general, “none [from the two groups] could talk to each other or “come near the other”. When contact was unavoidable, communication was scornful or insulting. Comments such as “you killers”, “you killed my family”, “you imprisoned my family” and “don’t look at me” were common. Hence, Tutsi and Hutu commonly identified “the other” group as an enemy, suspecting the counterpart of wishing them harm. A 29-year-old female Hutu widow explained:

“Because of genocide; you know that there are people whose family members have been killed and the others who were involved in those killings. So, these two categories of people could not talk to each other after genocide! There was fear and suspicion that each group will kill the other! Who could trust the other? Hatred was everywhere.”

*Peace basket* is located in Buhimba cell of Rutasira sector, Huye district (formerly named Butare) in the southern province of Rwanda. Until 1994 Huye district was known for a high Tutsi population (17%) and Jean Baptiste Habyalimana was the only Tutsi prefect (Prefecture’s governor) in Rwanda. Initially in April 1994, Huye became a hiding place for many Tutsi, as they fled there. Believing it would be a safe haven, thousands of Tutsi travelled the distance from their own villages. It is likely that more than 100,000 people were slain during the genocide, only in Huye prefecture.

The president of *Peace basket* is a widow, known as ‘mother’ among locals, who lost her husband during the genocide. At the time of establishment she was 64 years old, and her kinship is Tutsi. The vice president, a 46-year-old man, is Hutu and confessed having participated in genocide massacres. He was released from prison after nine years of imprisonment. During one conversation the president jokingly referred to herself as the mother in law of the younger vice-president. The elderly woman explained her reason for initiating the cooperative to alleviate her loneliness and to generate an income:

“When I initiated the idea of this cooperative, of course I wanted to re-launch the work of weaving basket and earn income as it was before; but I also wanted to alleviate my loneliness given that I couldn’t survive while I was living alone. Loneliness is dangerous!”

Weaving baskets using natural fibres is an old tradition that has lasted for centuries in Rwanda. Sisal fibers, sweet grass, banana leaves and raffia grow naturally throughout the country. Fibers are dyed with natural pigments or tea leaves to make various colours and patterns of the baskets. The skills of weaving have been passed on from one generation to the next, from grandmothers and mothers to their grandchildren and daughters. Weaved baskets are put to many types of usage in Rwandan society. Traditionally they have been used to store grain and food products, clothing and personal belongings. Small baskets may be used for packages of gifts for weddings or christenings. The weaving of baskets is therefore a link to their ancestral traditions, which is common for all cooperative members of Twa, Tutsi and Hutu kinship. Thus, the activity of weaving baskets is a means of bonding on the grounds of their shared history.

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34 In reality, also Tutsi killed other Tutsi in order not to be killed themselves, and Hutu saved the lives of Tutsi, while also Twa participated in genocidal acts.
35 Gupea, Peacebuilding in Post-Genocide Rwanda, p. 115.
36 Gupea, Peacebuilding in Post-Genocide Rwanda, p. 114.
37 Gupea, Peacebuilding in Post-Genocide Rwanda, p. 12.
38 Human Rights Watch, This is an extermination.
39 Gupea, Peacebuilding in Post-Genocide Rwanda, p. 113.
40 Gupea, Peacebuilding in Post-Genocide Rwanda, p. 129.
41 Gupea, Peacebuilding in Post-Genocide Rwanda, p. 120.
42 Gahaya Links, Weaving process.
43 Gahaya Links, Weaving process.
In the process of creating a stable community and peace-building, the importance of bringing people together was fundamental in changing relations between Hutu and Tutsi. All the 38 cooperative members pointed out the importance of Peace basket as an encounter as it brought people together. It provided a meeting place with the common interests of generating income to provide for their basic needs. On the grounds of the principle of equality and non-discrimination people encountered “the other” through personal contact. Anyone who wanted to join the cooperative could come.

“Peace basket cooperative! Yooo! At least for us, cooperative members, division came to halt. This cooperative truly brought people together again. After genocide! Oh! People were completely divided. Bringing them together seemed to be a dream. But our cooperative really brought them together. I am telling you. Watch that yourself. We are always seated together here.”

While the absence of communication may deteriorate relations between two groups, as well as two individuals, the importance of positive communication is essential in fostering healthy and stable relations. Members of both Hutu and Tutsi background, men and female, spoke of the importance of conversations during interactions with other cooperative members. Many enjoy to converse with others while weaving baskets, and also during scheduled meetings, training sessions and social gatherings. A 28-year-old female orphan genocide survivor stated:

“This cooperative enables good conversations. I mean conversations which soothe one’s mind. We are always reminded that we are equal. We called it a ‘basket of peace’ because it really became a peace basket; it helped us to talk to each other again, a thing which was like a dream. Conversations here soothe our minds because we discuss our problems and understand each other. If one understands your problems you feel soothed not!”

Peace basket cooperative allow all members to express their opinions, thoughts and feelings. However, in a wider perspective the encounters between members are an aspect of bottom-up approach to peace-building. Through these encounters between survivors and perpetrators community members have faced their fears and remorse through meeting and conversing with their counterparts. Whenever a perpetrator expressed remorse and confessed to having taken part in the killing of family members the trauma of survivors healed little by little. With truth telling and reconciliation both parties are able to heal their trauma. The end result of these encounters signifies the purpose of Restorative Justice, which views crime as “harm done to people and relationships”.

Restorative Justice allows for the victim of a crime and the person who committed the harm to meet face-to-face. Dialogue allows both parties telling their personal stories and experiences. Through openness and the acknowledgement of truth the perpetrator repents and confesses his own responsibility for own actions while the victim is able to express her loss and grief. The dialogue is intended for the victim to identify her needs and her counterpart is expected to take responsibility for his own actions and be accountable for them. As a result of acknowledgment of the truth on the one hand and forgiveness on the other, both parties are able to build mutual trust and establish a new foundation for a healthy relationship. Ultimately, both achieve a greater sense of security. As the 28-year-old female orphan explains in her own words:

“You see, former killers are in the cooperative, but they had come to me and repented. When they saw me, most of them were in tears again, and I became overwhelmed with pity; then I told them that there is no problem; conversations started and they repented again. Telling you all my experiences can take many hours. But what I am telling you, is that being with them every day, singing with them together, laughing with them together; Eh, even other survivors were happy; so I started to be a human again. Other survivors also encouraged me to ease my anger as they did. Now I am fine. They are helping me now. I am telling you, whenever I am with cooperative members while weaving baskets, including those who exterminated my family, I feel some peace of mind, I feel soothed. Even people who were afraid of me no longer do so. I have no problem now.”

Peace-building through Social Entrepreneurship

Social entrepreneurship is recognised worldwide as an approach to bring sustainable and lasting solutions to social problems. A social entrepreneur uses his or her own skills, knowledge and experience in creating new solutions that may complement public institutions. New solutions may help alleviate poverty among the socially excluded and marginalised, and in the long run, can be a driving force in peace-building. The concepts of social entrepreneurship and peace-building both address issues such as basic human needs, human rights and sustainable peace,

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44 Gupea, Peacebuilding in Post-Genocide Rwanda, p. 146.
45 Gupea, Peacebuilding in Post-Genocide Rwanda, p. 122.
47 Nusrat, What is – and is not – Restorative Justice.
48 Nusrat, What is – and is not – Restorative Justice.
49 Gupea, Peacebuilding in Post-Genocide Rwanda, p. 125.
In the case of Rwanda, social entrepreneurship functions most often through cooperatives. Most people have limited resources for investments, but may be able to pool some resources for investment with others in a cooperative, such as Peace basket. The cooperative members of Peace basket invest their time and skills in weaving baskets to generate income. Some baskets are sold to markets and individuals within Rwanda, while the cooperative have become renowned for their “peace baskets”. Internationally, as well as domestically, they have become symbols of peace in post-genocide Rwanda. Joining Peace basket is voluntarily for anyone who wishes to do so – widows, orphans, survivors and former genocide perpetrators weave baskets in communal areas.

The essence in cooperative work lies in opening channels of communication and interaction, creating opportunities (offers space) to address relational issues. The majority of the cooperative members expressed that the cooperative “broke down divisions” and “united us”. Cooperative work asserts a shared humanity, challenges prejudice and allows members to discuss experiences of problems and challenges. Members of Tutsi and Hutu ancestry conveyed that their encounters and conversations have helped them heal their traumas and eventually, move on. The sense of community and solidarity extends beyond work in Peace basket. For the occasion of festive events, such as weddings, cooperative members are often the first to offer their support.

As previously explained, prior to German and Belgian colonialism in Rwanda the population was organized in a social structure of pastoralists Hutu and the Tutsi monarchy. There was an interdependent relationship, although the Tutsi minority exerted greater influence due to their status. Before, during and after the genocide in 1994 the sense of solidarity and community was lost for the benefit of ethnic restructuring, initiated by Hutu extremists in the 1950s. With the creation of group identity on the grounds of Tutsi and Hutu ancestry people identified themselves and others on these grounds. Hence, there was a sense of “us and them” and the need to protect “us” from “them”. The loss of intergroup social capital was experienced throughout Rwanda. As a result, the population increasingly came to depend on their identities as Tutsi or Hutu, willingly or unwillingly.

The aspect of conflict transformation in Peace basket lies in the relational changes between cooperative members. George W. Allport argued in his Contact Hypothesis (1954) that it is possible to fight intergroup prejudice through contact. However, contact between the groups must be of mutual interest and based upon equal status in terms of background, wealth, skills and experience. Their contact is improved through having common goals through pooling their resources and skills, which requires cooperative problem solving and resolving practical tasks. The attainment of these goals should be mutually dependent, thus meaning that both groups depend on the other to attain its goals. As a result, intergroup competition between the groups will disappear as they will come to realise that they share interests and goals.

In Peace basket cooperative the common goal of income generation unites all members in solidarity with one another. The cultural aspect of working together to achieve common goals is a significant aspect in founding their sense of community. This may be traced back to Rwandan traditions of cooperating to achieve common goals, as for instance during Umuganda. Cooperative members have similarly realised that they all have faced the same problems, which are 1) living in poverty and 2) loneliness, due to their loss of social capital. Through realizing that they share common goals and helping each other out cooperative members view their colleagues as some of their closest friends, or even their new family. Cooperative members speak of greeting one another by hugging, and “love each other”.

In any kind of cooperative work situations occur that require discussions and participative decision-making involving all stakeholders. The foundation of Peace basket upon equality and unity allow for all members to voice their opinions. The right and opportunity to participate in democratic processes is an empowering element in poverty alleviation in marginalised communities and for individuals. On the basis of mutual understanding and respect, “None is inferior to the other”.

“None can live as an island”

The collective is the foundation of Rwandan culture, focusing on the culture and sense of community life/spirit. In this context ‘individualism’ is interpreted as the opposite – the lack of cooperativeness and a

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50 Gupea, Peacebuilding in Post-Genocide Rwanda, p. 49.
51 Gupea, Peacebuilding in Post-Genocide Rwanda, p. 123.
52 Gupea, Peacebuilding in Post-Genocide Rwanda, p. 130.
53 Gupea, Peacebuilding in Post-Genocide Rwanda, p. 37.
54 Gupea, Peacebuilding in Post-Genocide Rwanda, p. 49.
55 Gupea, Peacebuilding in Post-Genocide Rwanda, p. 130.
56 Gupea, Peacebuilding in Post-Genocide Rwanda, p. 130.
57 Gupea, Peacebuilding in Post-Genocide Rwanda, p. 126.
58 Gupea, Peacebuilding in Post-Genocide Rwanda, p. 154.
sense of belonging to the community, which is “hardly bearable” in Rwanda. The proverb *nta mugabo umwe*, translated to English as “None can live as an island”, refers to the importance of community and relationships, as expressed by cooperative members. In this sense, cooperatives such as Peace basket that draws in cultural aspects and addresses relational issues between individuals and within communities contributes to people reclaiming their cultural heritage, and hence, identity. Today, the focus is not on being Tutsi or Hutu, but rather, being Rwandan.

Skills of how to weave baskets is an important knowledge basis for those who join Peace basket cooperative. In using their skills they are able to earn an income for their livelihoods in addition to achieving a greater social capital than before. Their income and sense of a greater security and social support are fundamental in providing for their basic needs. Non-members of the cooperative stated their lack of skills as the main reason for not having joined Peace basket. However, they do recognise the cooperative nature of Peace basket as a means of income generation and to alleviate one’s loneliness. Additionally, a 54-year-old male family member of former genocide perpetrators conveyed his impression of how the cooperative has brought survivors and perpetrators together. He says, “Actually the fact that it [Peace basket] brought together killers and survivors is enough. None could talk to the other before. I also watch them; they are friends. For example during convivial festivals, they invite us also; we go and drink and eat together, and we all dance together. Watching that is really wonderful. It is like a miracle; none could think that people could get together again and sing and dance. It is there [in convivial parties] that we see how convivial they are; we dance, we sing; and all ‘ethnic’ groups are always there. I think a cooperative can do a lot in uniting people.”

The initial purpose for establishing Peace basket cooperative, as explained by 64-year-old ‘mother’, was to generate income in addition to alleviating loneliness. Members of Peace basket refer to “peace” as when one’s basic human needs are met and with the ability to sustain one’s family. Above all, “peace” is when people have well-being. Poverty alleviation and peace are hence interlinked, because as people no longer go hungry, they are able to live in peace with each other. As a 28-year-old female orphand survivor stated:

“When you are not starving; I mean, when you are not poor, then it is very easy to be open for dialogue and reconcile with the person who was your enemy. If you are hungry, can you hear something? You are rather full of umushsha.” [while smiling].

When comparing answers from non-members with those of cooperative members a significant difference is that cooperative members assert the educative importance of Peace basket. They view the cooperative as a means of education in teaching people how to live and communicate with each other non-violently. Through dialogue and conversing members give their testimonies about events that took place in the past, but their focus is on the here and now. Several members express the value of “conviviality” in contact with others. The manners in which they cooperate and communicate with one another are hence associated with the concept of conflict transformation. Furthermore, John Paul Lederach emphasises that peace work involves “intentional efforts” in addressing interpersonal relations in areas of conflict through “nonviolent approaches, which address issues and increase understanding, equality, and respect in relationships.” As Peace basket members have experienced how cooperative work united them, they are working to extend their knowledge as skilled basket weavers to other communities in Rwanda. A 21-year-old single male explained:

“When you are not starving; I mean, when you are not poor, then it is very easy to be open for dialogue and reconcile with the person who was your enemy. If you are hungry, can you hear something? You are rather full of umushsha.” [while smiling].

The aspect of education is highly relevant in the process of peace-building. Arguably, education is the most powerful tool in fighting prejudice and intolerance as a result of increased knowledge and understanding. The assertion that all humans share “fundamental human similarities” aids humanisation, inclusive of those who are perceived as different from “us”. Through “educative conversations” cooperative members listen to one another and come to understand other perspectives through dialogue. Formerly

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59 Gupea, Peacebuilding in Post-Genocide Rwanda, p. 166.
60 Gupea, Peacebuilding in Post-Genocide Rwanda, p. 151.
61 Gupea, Peacebuilding in Post-Genocide Rwanda, p. 131.
62 Gupea, Peacebuilding in Post-Genocide Rwanda, p. 156.
63 *Umushiha* (Kinyarwanda): refers to an excessive irritability and anger aimed against the world in general and other people.
64 Gupea, Peacebuilding in Post-Genocide Rwanda, p. 155.
67 Gupea, Peacebuilding in Post-Genocide Rwanda, p. 48.
perceived contradictions and differences concerning “the other” are eliminated through an understanding of common interests, solidarity and friendship.

Conclusions

This paper has discussed the significance of social entrepreneurship in peace-building in post-genocide Rwanda. Using the case study of Peace basket we have discussed how social entrepreneurship may contribute to poverty alleviation, and in the long run, to sustainable peace-building. When based upon the principles of democratic processes and equality cooperative work allows different voices and opinions to be heard, offering space in which people meet and converse. Through personal contact that is beneficial to both parties former perceptions of incompatible interests and goals are replaced by mutual trust, friendship and unity. The concept of conflict transformation involves altering power structures that contribute to inequalities, socio-economic disparities and human rights abuses. Through cooperative work Peace basket contributes to altering such inequalities in treating everyone as equal and educating people how to relate to one another non-violently. The main focus is on people living in a society in conflict, and their participation in the process of building a sustainable peace.

References


Santvauka

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