

Development agencies must reverse their neglect of Rwandan genocide survivors

*Noam Schimmel is a PhD student in LSE's Department of Media and Communications. He recently published a paper in *Development in Practice* entitled **Failed aid: how development agencies are neglecting and marginalising Rwandan genocide survivors**.*

Noam Schimmel argues that the needs and the rights of Rwandan genocide survivors are being ignored by international aid agencies.

Between April and June 1994, an estimated number of one million Rwandans were killed in the space of 100 days.



Rwandan hills

Most of the dead were Tutsis, while most of those who perpetrated the violence were Hutus.

This violence was a culmination of tension that goes back all the way to 1959 when Hutu resentment led to a series of riots which resulted in more than 20,000 Tutsis being killed.

A UN Resolution in December 2004 pledged to develop and implement programmes aimed at supporting vulnerable groups that continue to suffer from the effects of the 1994 genocide.

Despite this, Schimmel points out that specialised UN agencies such as UNDP and UNICEF do not prioritise genocide survivors in their programmes in Rwanda.

“The record of aid agencies affiliated with intergovernment organisations such as the United Nations betrays an even weaker commitment to meeting the needs of genocide survivors, as does that of most bilateral aid agencies.

“With the notable exception of the UK Department for International Development (DFID), which has invested significant funds in development projects aimed at genocide survivors, other bilateral agencies (North American, European, and Japanese) fail to address the needs of genocide survivors systemically and substantially.”

Schimmel also quotes Survivors Fund (SURF), who argues that “the development community has fallen short of its ethical obligation to survivors”.

Instead, many of these agencies have been putting their focus on reconciliation and peace-building, but Schimmel argues that this is not enough.

“These are worthy goals in their own right, but they should not be pursued at the expense of the human rights and welfare of genocide survivors.”

“Doing so will not only further marginalise and harm these survivors, but will perpetuate a culture of racism such as that which saturated Rwanda from 1959 to 1994 in the form of the Hutu Power philosophy, which propagated the belief that Tutsis have fewer rights and less human dignity than their Hutu co-citizens.

“Agencies that are genuinely interested in promoting national unity and reconciliation might reflect upon the fact that the surest route to achieving these goals is by enabling those innocent people who were persecuted on the basis of their ethnicity to have their rights, dignity, and equality affirmed and restored, rather than ignored and denied as they currently are by the majority of development agencies in Rwanda.”

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