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Post-Genocide Rwanda: The challenges for a post-ethnic civil society and the potentialities for good governance

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Post-Genocide Rwanda:

The challenges for a post-ethnic civil society and the potentialities for good governance

March 4-5, 2011

By: **Fiacre Bienvenu**
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African & African Diaspora Studies

Why take interest?

- Is of great interest in contemporary world.
  - E.g. used by global institutions (WB, UN, etc.) to measure performance of governance and so to determine donations to countries;
- Substantial funding flows across Africa in CS:
  - Bilateral Govts. and Private Corporates, e.g. Ford Foundation, Rockefeller Foundation, etc.);
- Limited academic studies specific to Rwandan civil society

Theoretical background

Faith in Civil Society?

- Evaluates (as accountability tool for) political institutions
- Is conducive to transition from authoritarianism to political democracy
- Shapes good governance
- Creates civil participation in public policy formation processes

Bibic and Grazino 1994, Mafunisa 2004

Critical of Civil Society?

- Represents a future world political order and suppresses nation-state orientation
- Replaces community identity given the reality of *limitless* global CS (focusing on political groupings and associations)
- Aims to "reconstruct, re-imagine, or remap world politics"

Lipschutz 1992, Baker 2002

Apolitical, community-evolved, and independent institutions to bridge constituencies and government; and promote their interests in policy formation & service delivery.

A brief history of CS in Rwanda

Pre-Genocide:

- Social fabric of Rwanda is not a set of dispersed and unconnected homes. It is made up of *local communities*:
  - i.e. spheres of collective memory and creation of consensus.
  - Families react with a '*community spirit*', when facing external interventions or local tensions

A brief history of civil society in Rwanda (Next)

Post-Genocide:

- Genocide, war, and refugee movements:
  - have profoundly perturbed the social fabric,
  - destroyed old community networks and 'trust' in them
  - paralyzed (in immediate effects) their ability to act in face of common adversity.

A brief history of civil society in Rwanda (TODAY)

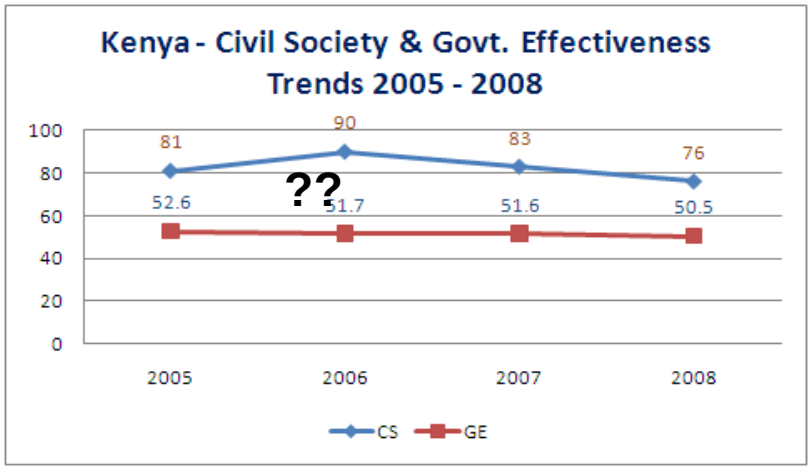
- Strong organizational structure at national level:
  - National CS platform unit (overseeing +50 umbrella entities)
  - Over 300 associations enrolled under the MINALOC
- Mostly, CS confused with Media, Private Sector, Cooperatives, and other parastatal institutions
- Kaiser & Wafula said CS has failed in EA region due to genocide, and mass movements of people in the region.

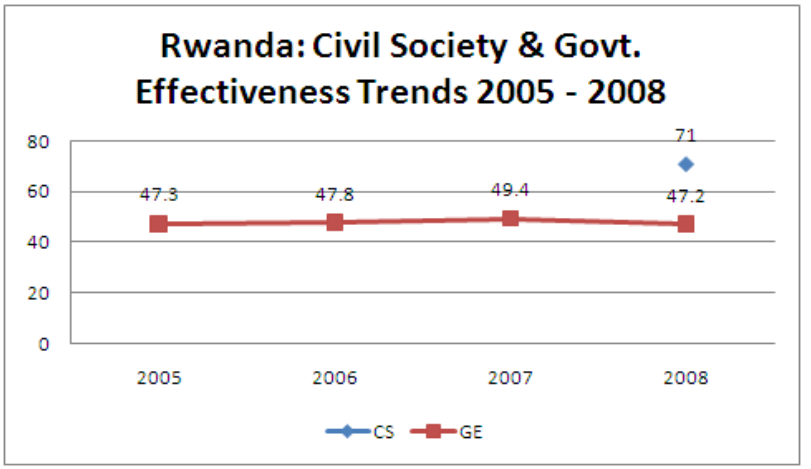
Building CS in Rwanda: the role of international organizations

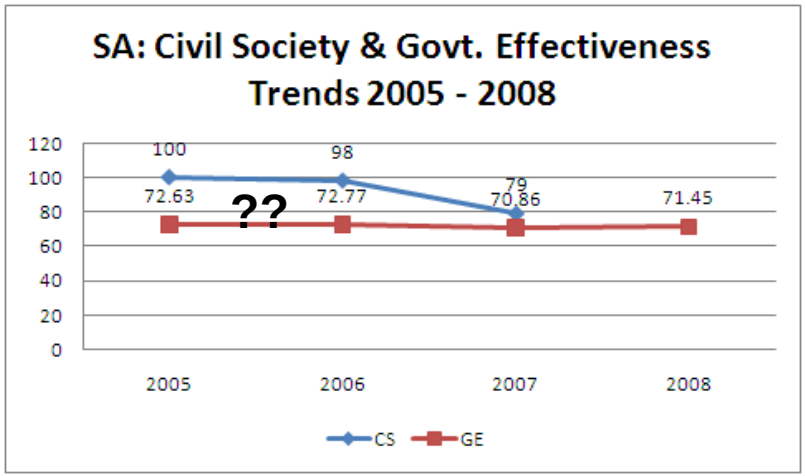
- Strength of *civil society* is marker of *good governance* for private donors and for WB, UN, other Multi-lateral institutions:
  - E.g. Substantial funding flows from USG, Norway, Sweden govts (MCC/USAID, Urban Institute, PIMA, SIDA, CARE, etc.)
  - Most support is institutional & technical capacity building

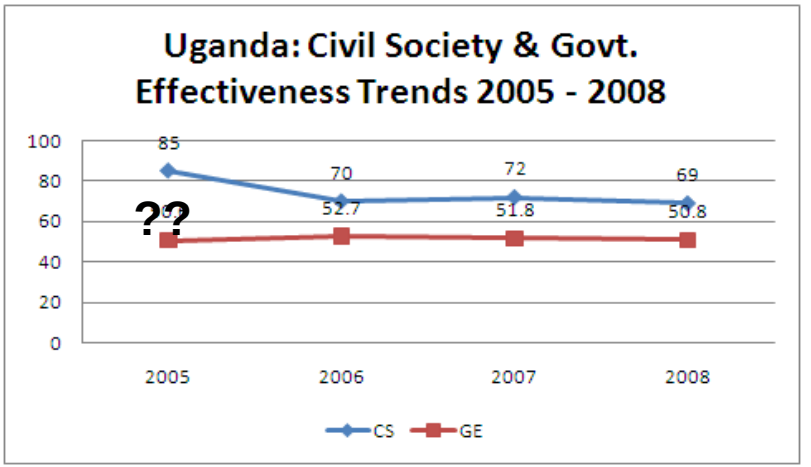
Connect with the traditional '*communitarism*'?

Trends connecting civil society and good governance









SOURCE: Global Integrity; Mo Ibrahim Foundation

Problematizing current CS in Rwanda

Re- potentialities for success of CS enforced in Rwanda:

- Is there all *capacity* to produce sustainable results despite massive funding & current GoR's political will?
- Will "community agency" prioritize CS over community resilience and public safety values?
- Can CS virtues work better even in an environment sensitive to ethnicity and bad history? *(e.g. Total Freedom vs public safety)*
- Is CS contributing to reconciliation and unity?

Research question

In post-genocide Rwanda, can this "transnational" civil society create good governance?

IMAGINATION IS IMPORTANT THAN KNOWLEDGE – A.E. IMAGINATION IS IMPORTANT THAN.

Initial Conclusion

- CS being proposed is too rigorous for Rwanda to create quickly aspired results
- Conceptual framework of CS being employed in Rwanda will create unintended results due to that:
  - is *inauthentic* (grassroots driven, fully independent, representing genuine constituencies)
  - Is *transnational* driven (fully external funding, and little in context of local state-society relations)
  - *State-captured* (coopted)
  - Is within Rwandan *exceptionalism* (ideological, and history)

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Murakoze!

Thank you!