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UNITED NATIONS NATIONS UNIES

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U.N. IN ACTION

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Programme No. 1019

Duration: 5'30"

GRASS ROOTS JUSTICE IN RWANDA

VIDEO

CROWDED STREET

CHURCH IN NYAMATA – SKULLS,
BONES

BLOATED BODIES IN A RIVER

AUDIO

NARRATION

In Rwanda men, and also women, wearing pink uniforms are a common sight. Pink identifies prisoners accused of participating in the genocide that shattered this society twelve years ago. (12.5")

In this church in Nyamata five thousand people were slaughtered in one go. Today, it is one of the many memorials to the massacre of up to one million men, women and children in the course of three short months. (13.5")

The bloodbath left the new government of Rwanda with the daunting task of trying some eight hundred thousand people suspected of having taken part in the killings. It would have taken a century to try all the accused in normal courts. A village-based justice system was created, Judge Celestin Mbarimombazi explains. (22")

MBARIMOMBAZI ON-CAMERA

MBARIMOMBAZI: (In French)

“The gacaca system is based on our customary legal system from a long time ago.” (10”)

JUDGES ENTER COURTROOM

NARRATION

Years of planning and testing out pilot projects led to the largest experiment in popular justice in modern history. The local judges were elected. They are called Inyangamugayo or righteous people and work on a voluntary basis. Christine Umutoni is the gacaca expert for the United Nations Development Programme. (23”)

JUDGES IN
CLASSROOM/UMUTONI ON-
CAMERA

UMUTONI:

“All they have is that they are examples, that they are good people, they can’t cheat, they’re not sectarian. But that’s all. They don’t have any legal training.” (11.4”)

TRAINING

NARRATION

More than 250,000, close to six percent of the country’s adult population, serve as judges in the gacacas. They were trained with assistance from the European Union and the United Nations Development Programme. (14.5)

MBARIMOMBAZI ON-CAMERA

MBARIMOMBAZI: (In French)

“We have been trained at three different times. I myself was taught to prepare others, with the

help of this booklet.” (13”)

MAN IN PINK, COURTROOM
MAN SPEAKS WITH JUDGES

NARRATION

Today, Thadeo Mbirkanyi is accused of killing two boys. He has no defense lawyer. There is no prosecutor. Everyone in the gacaca court speaks for themselves. This makes the grass roots courts different from regular courtrooms in the West, and even in Rwanda.

Coordinator, Paul Rwangalinde. (23”)

RWANGALINDE ON-CAMERA

RWANGALINDE: (Broken English)

“We are trying to make some investigation to know exactly how genocide was prepared, how genocide was conducted, and the consequences of the genocide itself.” (14”)

JUDGE QUESTIONS MEN

NARRATION

The judge questions Elia Kinyogote, the father who lost two sons in the genocide. (5”)

JUDGE

JUDGE: (In Broken English)

“You really saw the attack with your own eyes.” (3”)

FATHER

FATHER: (In Broken English)

“Yes, I saw the accused with another killer.” (3”)

BUILDING HOUSES

NARRATION

These workers have been convicted in gacaca courts. They have changed their pink prison outfits for a navy vest. The letters TIG identify them as serving their sentence by working in the interest of the community. Convicts cut their penalty by half when they agree to do community service instead of remaining in jail. Stanislas Nyiribambe likes the alternative. (26")

NYIRIBAMBE ON-CAMERA

NYIRIBAMBE:

"Since I confessed my crimes and asked the victims to forgive me, I think that the gacaca did its job well and I accept my punishment." (8")

WORKERS DIGGING IN YARD

NARRATION

The convicts pay for their crimes with the sweat of their brow. They are as poor as most Rwandans who live on a dollar a day and could not pay for the damages they have caused. People in this community accept the houses they build for widows and orphans as a compensation. (17.5")

JUDGE ON-CAMERA

JUDGE: (In French)

"You couldn't say that it's a hundred percent but really there's been a high level of reconciliation between people who are guilty and those who are victims." (14")

SKULLS/COFFINS

NARRATION

The unspeakable crimes of genocide cannot be erased or forgotten. But the gacaca court system, even with all its imperfections, is helping re-establish the rule of law in one of the poorest countries in Africa. (14")

LOGO

This report was prepared by the United Nations. (3")