

# PROFILE: RWANDA



A nightmarish 100 days in 1994 has left an indelible legacy, but Rwanda has taken decisive steps to prevent a re-emergence of ethnic strife.

Between 800,000 and 1 million Rwandans were slaughtered in little more than three months. Most of the victims were Tutsi, but moderate Hutus who refused to take part were also killed.

Yet there was no genuine ethnic difference between the two groups, who shared the same language and lived in the same regions.

The genocide left 85,000 child-headed households and a near 70:30 female-to-male ratio. Infrastructure was devastated, and social dislocation has fuelled the spread of HIV.

Some 120,000 people were accused of involvement, overwhelming the legal system. In 2000, the government revived a traditional justice system – called *Gacaca* – and hearings took place at village level, taking evidence from key eyewitnesses etc. Because *Gacaca* emphasised confession, forgiveness and reparation, cases were turned round quickly and a great measure of reconciliation was achieved.

Most of Rwanda's people survive as subsistence farmers, but pressure on land in a country similar in size to Wales has caused severe soil erosion and deforestation.

Rwanda's economy relies on exports of tea and coffee – and is vulnerable to price fluctuations on the world commodity market, as well as being affected by climate change.

## TEARFUND'S WORK IN RWANDA

Tearfund has been working in Rwanda since the early 1990s. In 1994, we responded to the aftermath of the genocide. Since then, we have worked with partners to launch peace-building initiatives and help communities to help themselves.

We currently work with five Rwandan partners.

Across ethnic divides, Moucecore works through the church to enable 'solidarity transformation': community group leaders are trained in peace and reconciliation, while group members are helped to understand, face and resolve relational conflict.

Association Mwana Ukundwa (AMU), meaning 'loved child', believes education is key to ending child poverty. AMU is empowering orphans, foster families and child-headed households through small business loans and training in skills such as tailoring and embroidery.

In hunger- and disaster-prone southern Rwanda, the Rural Development Interdiocesan Service is boosting food production through activities such as valley drainage and irrigation, compost and manure production, poultry and pig farming, fish farming and bee keeping.

African Evangelistic Enterprise is helping 30,000 people in eastern Rwanda through self-help groups, enabling them to access credit and pool their resources in saving schemes.

Alliance Evangélique Pour la Santé et Développement (AESD) uses local church networks to raise awareness of HIV and challenge stigma and prejudice.

Other AESD projects include tackling urban poverty, and village-led initiatives to improve food production and water and sanitation.

➤ Pray for people living in poverty in Rwanda.

➤ Please pray for our Rwandan partners as they seek to help others.

➤ And pray for Rwanda: for justice, peace, health and hope for everyone.