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Guillebaud in Rwanda

of Rwanda is also in favour of promoting birth planning, it would be ideal to add discussion of that issue within some scripts — in a similar way to the messages about HIV prevention that they have been conveying for some years.

How is Rwanda, the country?

On the surface, remarkably normal. There are all the expected problems of poverty in Africa, but Rwanda has better infrastructure (including excellent main roads) and less overt corruption than adjoining territories. The Government has done much to establish security and to promote reconciliation. The infamous identity cards which caused the death of so many Tutsi have been changed so everyone is classified as “Rwandan”; there is no longer discrimination on tribal lines in schools; and there are commissions for reconciliation throughout the land in a genuine attempt to bring about national unity.

In an effort to deal with over 125,000 prisoners and with the judicial system overwhelmed after the genocide, in 2000 the Government decided to return to a form of the traditional justice system called *Gacaca* (pronounced Gachacha). Local administrative areas selected people of good standing in the areas to direct these courts and spent some months training them in judicial procedures. Large billboards all over the country proclaimed that ‘if everyone admits to what they have done and tells what they have seen then the truth will save the country’. The idea was that if people were tried in the *Gacaca* courts in their own locality then the truth would emerge. In 2003 President Kagame issued decrees freeing several thousand prisoners. These were first of all the sick, those over 70 years of age, those who had been children in the genocide, and those who had no dossier against them. Then a few weeks later another group of those who had admitted the crimes against them were also released. The rationale for releasing the latter group was that they had already served about 8 years in prison and it was unlikely that the *Gacaca* courts would impose a longer sentence.

Although according to Meg all this is patchy and slow, only working well in some areas, I felt that Rwandans were well on the way to drawing a line under the dreadful events of 1994. But will they be able to defuse the time-bomb of their own fertility, on track to so grossly exceed the yields from the fertility of their beautiful land, with its great rolling hills and green valleys?

