



Stadshuskällaren Dinner Remarks by Her Excellency First Lady Mrs Jeannette Kagame

IMBUTO FOUNDATION'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE VISION OF RWANDA
TOWARDS SOCIO-ECONOMIC TRANSFORMATION



14 September 2022

Exclusive Dinner hosted by Stadshuskällaren

Sponsored by: Reach for Change, BMW Foundation and RESPOND
at City Hall

from
6 -10 pm

Excellencies, Distinguished Guests, Dear Friends,

Good evening!

Thank you for having me here tonight!

Ladies and Gentlemen, allow me first, to sincerely thank, “Reach for Change”, for inviting me to this delightful dinner, hosted by **Stadshuskällaren** [*Stad-shoo-skair-llah-reun*], and to share a few words of my own, on Rwanda’s socio-economic transformation.

Esteemed Guests,

The story of Rwanda, our home affectionately referred to as the land of a Thousand Hills....

(Pause)

Where to begin? What an odyssey!

The dawning words, “*Let there be light*”, feel rather applicable here.

Rwanda has emerged from the darkness of a painful past, into the glow of sustainable progress;

Costly liberation, and deliberate reinvention, have led at last, to the soaring flight, of a reborn phoenix.

These advancements are the result of ambitious and strategic leadership choices, and the actions to match. They are the Promise of a Generation.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Will you journey back in time with me one instant? Perhaps travelling such great distance together, will let you in on how far we've come.

Honourable Guests,

The denigration, that our country received, as it first embarked on its journey of healing, was disappointing:

- Failed state.
- Fractured community.
- Ethnicity-centered.
- Broken, hopeless, helpless.

We had refused to forever lose, our rich mother soil, to hateful divisionism.

And yet, what was initially said of our rebuilding efforts, which have now borne their fruits, was everything but kind.

But I hope you will agree, **Ladies and Gentlemen**, that if the world won't give you kindness, you must create your own.

How, might you ask?

How does one disempower ethnicist pseudoscience?

How do we ensure that empathetic leadership, replaces discordant governance?

How do we go, **Dear Guests**, from destruction to progress?

How do you hail from dehumanization to forgiveness?

How do we overcome such unimaginable atrocities, of which I would like to name a few:

- **The more than a million victims we lost; many of which are still refused the decency, of having their burial site shared with their families?**
- **The half a million of our women, infected with HIV – often purposely – as a result of rape; a weapon of war?**
- **300,000 of our children killed, and 100,000 orphaned during a 100 days of murderous craze?**

- **The consequences of a leadership, of such mediocre ambition, that approximately 1500 of university graduates, had been recorded over its thirty years of divisive governance?**

I believe that we all know, the number of socio-economic challenges, that result from such tragic conditions and outcomes, **Ladies and Gentlemen**, so I will not expand on them further.

Besides, I have challenged the jovialness of this evening enough, with this necessary return back to a heavy, dark past.

So in different spirits, will you all join me once more, but this time to look to an encouraging present, and indeed a bright future for Rwanda?

Honourable Guests,

The Rwandan life expectancy has sprung by 42 whole years, four whole decades; or for some of you, your whole lives, (SMILE), since 1994, to our current day.

But, for a longer life, to indeed lead to a better life, empowerment must begin from youth, as you very well know, **Reach for Change.**

Indeed, tonight's event theme interweaves so aptly, the relationship between the welfare of the youth, and socio-economic transformation.

This speaks to me, to us Rwandans, personally; as 40% of our population is under 15 years old.

Serving under this demographic structure, Imbuto Foundation has pushed for solutions to our particular challenges.

Imbuto has:

- enrolled 100,000 children into Early Childhood Development Centres.
- Provided over 10,000 scholarships to Brilliant Secondary School Students, from financially disadvantaged backgrounds.
- Awarded 5,113 Young girls for their Academic Excellence.
- Facilitated 300,000 young people's access, to Adolescent Sexual Reproductive Health services, including HIV screening.

- Placed Hundreds of thousands of dollars directly, into the hands of young Rwandan entrepreneurs, across dozens of projects, inspiring social change.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We believe that the fight of every responsible Rwandan citizen, and of every institution supporting Rwanda's progress, must echo our Leadership's efforts, to re-invent our story, to retrace our trajectory.

So hand in hand, as a nation, we have sought to create a humane, community-centered cycle of mutual support, and innovative Homegrown Solutions, pursuing Economic Transformation.

This, **Dear Guests**, is what I believe to be the essence of our journey thus far, as a nation; and what we, Imbuto Foundation, a microcosm of this nation, have drawn inspiration from, to design our **Holistic Cycle Approach** of service provision.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Thank you for allowing me this moment to revisit our journey.

I believe that the heartbeat of our shared dream, is improved welfare, for all the populations until now under-served, including the Youth.

Therefore, I am hopeful that the future will hold for us all, more opportunities for enriching collaboration, back in Rwanda, which will forever welcome its Friends, with a fond heart and open arms.

A wonderful evening to you all, and thank you!