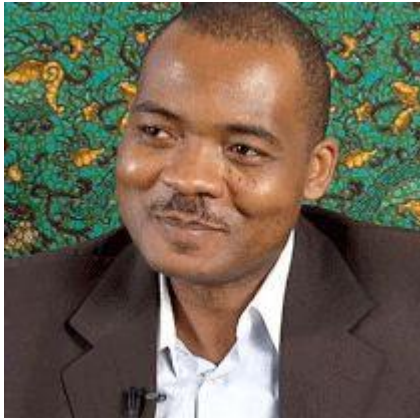




Voices from the Rwanda Tribunal

Official Transcript: Jean-Pele Fomete (Part 4 of 15)



Role:	Program Director
Country of Origin:	Cameroon
Interview Date:	24 October 2008
Location:	Arusha, Tanzania
Interviewers:	Batya Friedman John McKay Robert Utter
Videographer:	Max Andrews
Interpreter:	None

Interview Summary

Jean-Pele Fomete speaks about his role in court management services, overseeing legal aid and capacity building for pan-African justice systems. He highlights the need for civil society support to make the Tribunal a success, which has been challenging in Rwanda. He also comments on the lack of infrastructure in Africa, and the difficulty in mobilizing resources and ensuring adequate access to information about the Tribunal's work. He discusses the positive and negative impacts of the ICTR and international human rights standards on Rwanda's justice system.

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Part 4

- 00:00 **Batya Friedman: You also mentioned the support of civil society and just to be a little clear on that so your perception for the ICTY in Europe was that in general Europe as a whole supported that tribunal. Is your sense that Africa as a whole – how did it view having the tribunal here? Do you have a sense of that?**
- 00:27 (), at the ICTY you had all those organizations from the Balkans, they had, they had a vested interest but you also had the, the powerful international NGOs, you know, operating in the area of human rights.
- 00:47 They were following closely, monitoring what was happening at the ITCY. That level of attention was, was not visible here. That's for the international NGOs. Coming to African civil society structures there were simply none.
- 01:05 **BF: Mm-hmm.**
- 01:06 We had to lobby some to come here. We had to build a, a press center to have journalists come here and see. So we lobbied, we, we pushed for, for many organizations to begin paying attention to, to what we were doing here.
- 01:21 And to date, I can't even tell you. You can give a list of many African organizations really interested in what is happening here apart from victims' organizations in, in, in Rwanda. Yeah.
- 01:41 **BF: So you've seen al-, also a lot of development of the tribunal in the long time that you've been here. So we've been talking about the early days when there wasn't much infrastructure, not enough support from the UN, maybe not enough support or understanding from the African continent about what the tribunal was.**
- 02:00 **BF: Have you seen changes in the time that you have been here? And what would those changes be?**
- 02:09 Yeah, there have been changes, you know. It might be very simple and easier to tell the others what they have not done. But one of the lessons we learned was, you know, we had, ought to do more ourselves in terms of telling the various constituencies what we were doing, the challenges we were facing and, and we began to do that, like making sure we were present at the Organization of African Unity meetings and later on the African Union.
- 02:47 Making sure we are in close contact with the member state at the UN. For example, we ended up creating or pushing for the establishment of informal ad hoc groups that we call the friends of the tribunal. Those are groups of diplomats, you know, monitoring closely our operations, telling us what they feel, we're doing well or less well, and assisting us in getting the resources we need in various fora.

- 03:19 So we have a group of friends in Dar es Salaam. We have a group of friends of the tribunal in, in Kigali. And they report to their capitals but also to their missions at the headquarters. We developed some partnerships with NGOs including one like here on the, they report on the activities of the tribunal from Arusha on a daily basis.
- 03:43 They avoid commenting. They just tell you there were a few trials, these are the issues, and so on and so forth. But it helps people know what is going on at the ICTR on a daily basis. So we, we did that. We tried to mobilize resources to build a press center so that they could, they could have the required facilities to report to the outside world on, on what is going on.
- 04:08 And also, in terms of resources – when the UN became aware that we had been complaining and that we needed more, we, we got almost everything we needed. So it's, it's the past. So we got all the resources. We got to look after witnesses.
- 04:28 We, we had enough resources to recruit the experienced prosecution teams, defense lawyers to re-, compensate, to remunerate their services up to international standards and things like that, because I remember in those days you'd pay a counsel 200 dollars a day for eight hours of work.
- 04:50 It, it, it was not commensurate with the level of expertise that was expected of them so the scale of remuneration is much higher now. It's the same as what is paid to the counsel operating at the ICTY, so on and so forth.
- 05:07 So progressively in terms of financial support we got what was required, I should say so, in terms of having more support in the opinion and things like that.
- 05:26 I think we've made quite some, some progress, but that happened through the, the hard work of the, the judges and making sure there's more media attention but also more attention from the academia.
- 05:44 BF: Mm-hmm.**
- 05:44 And, and we did that also through launching a very aggressive internship program that brought here many, many law students not only from the west but also from, from, from Africa.