

**Women's Empowerment and Development:  
The Contribution of Parliamentary Gender Quotas and the Case of  
Rwanda**

By

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## **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

Abstract.....	5
Acknowledgements.....	6

### **CHAPTER 1**

Introduction.....	7
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#### **Literature Review**

1. Gender and Inequality in Formal Politics.....	14
Political Factors	
Socio-Economic Factors	
Socio-Cultural Factors	
2. Women in Politics.....	23
The Necessity of Women in Political Bodies	
Women’s Current Roles in Parliament	
Methods of Increasing Representation – Why Quotas?	
3. Parliamentary Gender Quotas.....	35
Theoretical Debate	
Positive Discrimination or International Approval?	
Nature of the State	
Increased Representation versus Increased Empowerment	
4. Methodology.....	51

### **CHAPTER 2**

#### **Rwanda: A Historical, Political, and Gender Background**

1. Historical Overview.....	56
2. Politics in Rwanda.....	59
3. Women Pre-Genocide.....	60
4. Women During Genocide.....	64
5. Women Post-Genocide.....	66

### **CHAPTER 3**

#### **Rwandan Women Parliamentarians Case Study: Women-Focused Legislation and Policies since the Quota**

Introduction.....	75
1. Gender-Focused Laws Pre- and Post- Quota.....	76
2. Implementation Mechanisms and Results.....	83
Gender Monitoring Office	
National Gender Policy	
Gender Budgeting	
Education	
Healthcare	
Gender-Based Violence	
Economic Empowerment	

### **CHAPTER 4**

#### **Why the Success? Parliamentary Gender Quota is not the only Factor**

Introduction.....	100
1. History of a Strong Women’s Movement.....	101
2. Genocide.....	105
3. International Aid and Support.....	107
4. The RPF and Paul Kagame.....	108
5. Gender Quota Entrenched in Constitution.....	110

### **CHAPTER 5**

#### **Moving Forward: Current Obstacles and What this means for Development**

Introduction.....	113
1. Authoritarian Tendencies of the RPF.....	114
2. Urban Development: What about the Rural Population?.....	127

3. Feminized Poverty.....	130
4. “Brain Drain” for Women’s Organizations.....	133
Conclusion: What does this mean for Development?.....	136
Appendix.....	142
Bibliography.....	146

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Abstract

As Parliamentary gender quotas have become increasingly popular, so too has the debate surrounding their effectiveness in enhancing women's representation and gender equality in governments around the world. Women offer unique and important perspectives to the political process, and thus their increased political representation and empowerment can advance the very process of development. In 2003, the Rwandan government Constitutionally enacted a gender quota, requiring at least 30 percent representation of women in all areas of decision-making, including Parliament. By 2010, Rwandan women MPs surpassed the quota's requirement and represented 57 percent of Parliament. What must be determined is whether Rwanda's gender quota and resulting increased number of women MPs has contributed to an increase in the number and effectiveness of women-focused laws and policies. I will examine the number of women-focused laws in Rwanda pre and post quota, consider their implementation mechanisms, and use statistical data and interviews with Rwandan MPs to analyze the implementation and effectiveness of these laws. We will find women-focused legislation has increased significantly in Rwanda since the quota, but that the quota is just one of several driving forces behind Rwandan women MPs' political empowerment. A willing government, Proportional Representation electoral system, Constitutionally entrenched gender quota, and the results of Rwanda's civil war and genocide will all be determined contributing factors. However, we will find Rwanda's history of a strong pre-genocide and pre-quota women's movement has ultimately been the driving force behind women's progress in Parliament, once again enforcing the age-old adage that authentic development and empowerment must truly emanate from the bottom up.

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## **Chapter 1**

### **Introduction**

In 2003, the Rwandan government amended its Constitution under President Paul Kagame and the Rwanda Patriotic Front (RPF) to include a gender quota at all levels of formal decision-making within the country.

“The State of Rwanda commits itself to... Building a state governed by the rule of law, a pluralistic democratic government, equality of all Rwandans and between women and men reflected by ensuring that women are granted at least thirty per cent of posts in decision making organs.”<sup>1</sup>

Since 2003, the RPF has enforced the quota with reserved seats for women who as a result, consistently represent at least 30 percent of posts in all political decision-making bodies. However, unlike most other countries with gender quotas, the number of elected women in Rwanda’s parliament has grown in each election, with an increase in numbers beyond what the quota requires. As of July 2012, women represented 57 percent of Rwanda’s Chamber of Deputies (Lower House) and 38 percent of its Senate (Upper House) in Parliament.<sup>2</sup>

A large debate has arisen surrounding the increased popularity of parliamentary gender quotas and their effectiveness. On one side, scholars and policy-makers believe quotas are a form of affirmative action that place women in positions in which they actively engage in decision-making and fight for policy that formally promotes equality and empowers other women. On the other side, it is

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<sup>1</sup> Rwanda. Parliament of Rwanda. *Constitution of the Republic of Rwanda*. 17 June 2010. Web. 25 Nov. 2012.

<sup>2</sup> “Women in National Parliaments”. *Inter-Parliamentary Union*. 31 Oct. 2012. Geneva, Switzerland. Web. 25 Nov. 2012.

argued gender quotas simply place women in positions for which they may not necessarily be fully qualified, and are a way for corrupt governments to maintain power while not actually enhancing women's ability to promote women's interests and affect policy changes.

In terms of international development, this research is significant for a number of reasons. In many societies around the world, women are often one of the most marginalized groups, but also represent some of the most unique, diverse, and significant perspectives and experiences of issues that are important to development. Women's experiences of conflict, violence, economic work, and peacekeeping are often very different from men. On average, women usually compose fifty percent of a society's population, but only around nineteen percent of parliament.<sup>3</sup> Because they hold such unique perspectives and such a large portion of the population, women are huge stakeholders in the process of development. Because the role of parliamentarians is to represent the population and establish legislation that formally sets the stage for individuals' rights and development in a country, women should be more equally represented in parliaments worldwide.

In Rwanda, the number of women in parliament has increased drastically since the enactment of the gender quota. What this thesis will seek to answer is whether Rwanda's gender quota and resulting increased number of women MPs has contributed to an increase in the number and effectiveness of women-focused laws and policies since 2003. One of the major criteria for determining the success of increasing number of women MPs according to Joni Lovenduski and Azza Karam is

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<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*



to be able to detect increasing amounts of women-focused legislation.<sup>4</sup> If we see an increase in not only the number but effectiveness (which will be measured by implementation mechanisms and resulting improvements or lack thereof statistically) of women-focused laws, we can assume first that these women MPs are empowered in terms of voicing women's issues and concerns, and second that these effectively implemented laws and policies will have contributed to increased gender equality within the country. The definition of "empowerment" can be ambiguous, especially within development literature. For the purposes of this thesis, Dr. Jo Rowlands<sup>5</sup> concept of empowerment will be utilized. Dr. Rowlands believes empowerment involves more than simply having or gaining access to decision-making. To be fully empowered, one must also perceive ones' self as "able and entitled to occupy a decision-making space". Thus, empowerment includes not only power to be able to do or act, but also "power from within", which can emerge when negative social constructions are undone and those affected by them view themselves as having the capacity to act.<sup>6</sup> Once the level of empowerment women MPs have experienced (in terms of pushing women-focused laws) is established, it will then be examined what factors influenced the level of empowerment they have experienced. It will be determined whether or not their increase in representative

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<sup>4</sup> Lovenduski, Joni and Azzam Karam. "Women in Parliament: Making a Difference". Stockholm: International IDEA. (2002) Web. 2013.

<sup>5</sup> Dr. Jo Rowlands is a Senior Global Programme Adviser in Governance and Institutional Accountability for Oxfam in the UK. Rowlands holds a PhD from Durham University for which she studied issues of power and the concept of empowerment based on community field studies in Honduras.

<sup>6</sup> Rowlands, Jo. "Empowerment Examined." *Development and Social Diversity*. Ed Deborah Eade. Oxfam: UK and Ireland. (1996): 86-93. Web. 20 Dec. 2012.

numbers due to the enactment of the quota was the main factor in their empowerment, or if there were other factors involved. Determining these factors will provide important insight to the study of parliamentary gender quotas, as well as to women's empowerment and development as a whole.

Chapter one will review the literature surrounding the debate regarding the necessity and effectiveness of parliamentary gender quotas. A background for the debate will be presented including an analysis of why and how women are historically politically underrepresented and why an increase in women's political representation and participation is an important aspect of development in any country. Next, the literature reflecting viewpoints of women's current political roles will be reviewed as well as various explanations as to why quotas have become so popular in an effort to enhance gender equality in the formal political sector. With a strong analysis of the underlying issues, the literature surrounding parliamentary gender quotas will then be presented, starting with several theoretical analyses. Finally, literature from both sides of the debate surrounding gender quotas' effectiveness in enhancing women's formal participation and gender equality as a whole will be presented. At this point the gap in the existing literature will become clear: since parliamentary gender quotas are a fairly new phenomenon, there is still much to be known with regard to the role they have played in enhancing women MPs' ability to share women's issues and promote policies that empower other women. Thus, in the following chapters, we will examine the case of Rwanda and the role its Constitutionally entrenched gender quota has played in empowering women

MPs to actively push women's-based legislation and policies, and the results this has had on gender equality as a whole.

In Chapters three and four we will find women-focused legislation and policies have indeed increased significantly in Rwanda since 2003 when the gender quota was enacted. However, what we will also find is the gender quota is just one of several driving forces behind Rwandan women MPs' strength and accomplishments. A history of a strong grassroots women's movement, a willing government, and the results of genocide in 1994 have all contributed to the success of Rwanda's gender quota and increase in women's-based legislation. Recognizing these contributing factors will provide an important lesson for development, reinforcing the long-standing ideology that all things are interrelated and long-lasting development truly does emanate from the bottom-up.

## **Literature Review**

All humans are gendered beings. As a result, gender perspectives are significant in the analysis of all areas of human development.<sup>7</sup> The term 'gender' has been socially constructed in different ways by different societies and refers to the varied and complex arrangements between men and women, encompassing the organization of reproduction, sexual divisions of labour and cultural definitions of femininity and masculinity.<sup>8</sup> In many underdeveloped areas that have experienced conflict such as Rwanda, women often represent one of the most insecure, marginalized groups and because of their different experiences, offer new processes to the task of constructing peace in the aftermath. The UN estimates that out of the world's 1.8 billion people living in poverty, 70 percent are women.<sup>9</sup> Throughout the developing world, a significant wage gap exists between women and men, and in many regions, women do more than 75 percent of agricultural work but are routinely denied land rights.<sup>10</sup> It is also important to recognize gender roles are not static and change over time. In an instance of civil political crisis, gender roles and responsibilities can change rapidly, as we will see was the case in Rwanda. Women are fundamental stakeholders in the peacemaking process because they often gain significant responsibilities in post-conflict areas and thus have increased priorities in transforming societies from conflict to peace.<sup>11</sup> With such an emphasis on the necessity of women as stakeholders of peace and positive development, it is

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<sup>7</sup> Jackson, Cecile and Ruth Pearson. *Feminist Visions of Development: Gender Analysis and Policy*. London: Routledge, 1998. Print.

<sup>8</sup> Bradley, Harriet. *Gender*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007. Print.

<sup>9</sup> United Nations Development Fund for Women. 2009. Web 2012.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>11</sup> Powley, Elizabeth. "Strengthening Governance: The Role of Women in Rwanda's Transition". *Women Waging Peace, Hunt Alternatives Fund*. 2003. Web. 2012.

important to understand why such vast inequalities exist between the sexes, and how they can be changed.

In the early 1990s, the World Bank identified seven indicators for measuring the status of women in different countries around the world. The seven indicators were purchasing power parity, maternal mortality rate, infant mortality rate, life expectancy at birth, post-secondary education, labour force participation, and participation in parliamentary assemblies.<sup>12</sup> These seven indicators were meant to reflect the seven roles of women in the family, economy and society. For the purpose of this thesis, the last equality indicator, (participation in the political parliamentary assemblies) will be analyzed. Julie Ballington emphasizes the significance of women's increased participation within the political realm by arguing the development of any political agenda that does not include the perspectives, views and experiences of those who will be affected is not credible.<sup>13</sup>

A recent development within the realm of gender and equality and women's political participation, has been the vast implementation of gender quotas within government systems. Between 1995 and 2009 women's representation in parliaments throughout the world increased from 11 to 18 percent.<sup>14</sup> This increase is largely credited to the increase of gender quotas that have been adopted by many governments worldwide. Currently, nearly half of the countries around the world

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<sup>12</sup> Mason, Andrew D. and Elizabeth M. King. Report on Engendering Development. The World Bank. 2001. Web. 2012.

<sup>13</sup> Ballington, Julie. "Introduction." *Women in Parliament: Beyond Numbers*. International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance. Sweden 2005. Web. 2012.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

have implemented some form of gender quota system for public elections.<sup>15</sup> As political gender quotas are becoming increasingly common, many scholars and policymakers have justified their popularity by arguing gender equity is necessary before gender equality can be achieved. Gender equity implies fairness and impartiality for women and men with an eventual result of equality, which signifies balance, parity and symmetry.<sup>16</sup> The apparent inequalities between women and men have provided justification for many governments to enhance equity by implementing formal political quotas. Author Krishna Ahoojapatel argues affirmative action, positive discrimination, and quota systems have become important policy instruments that can bring equity into economic institutions and social structures.<sup>17</sup> Frene Ginwala argues, “while the debate about enfranchisement of women and participation of women in decision making often focuses on issues of justice, equity and human rights, the representation of women and the inclusion of their perspectives and experience into the decision-making process will inevitably lead to solutions that are more viable and satisfy a broader range of society.”<sup>18</sup>

### **1. Gender Inequality in Formal Politics**

Understanding several conceptual and theoretical perspectives of gender equality in formal politics is necessary in order to properly contextualize the debate

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<sup>15</sup> Baldez, Lisa. “The Pros and Cons of Gender Quota Laws: What Happens When You Kick Men Out and Let Women In” *Politics and Gender: Gender Quotas II*. Vol. 2. (2006) 102-109. Web. 2012.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> Ahoojapatel, Krishna. “Development has a Woman’s Face: Insights from within the UN.” A.P.H Publishing Corporation: New Delhi, Sept. 2007. Print.

<sup>18</sup> Ginwala, Frene. “Forward.” *Women in Parliament: Beyond Numbers*. Eds Julie Ballington and Azza Kanam. International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance: Sweden, 2005. 14-17. Web. 25 Nov. 2012.

surrounding the implementation of gender quotas in Parliaments around the world. By examining the underlying factors that have influenced the underrepresentation of women in Parliaments, it becomes easier to comprehend the recent increase in gender quotas and the role they can play in empowering women. Statistics show that on an international scale, women are extremely under-represented in Parliaments. The Inter-Parliamentary Union estimates that as of February 2010, the average percentage of women acting as Parliamentarians worldwide was merely 19 percent.<sup>19</sup>

This section will provide a background on the need for Parliamentary gender quotas by outlining the obstacles women face when entering, or attempting to enter formal politics. With the recent increase in the implementation of gender quotas, many scholars have studied factors of inequality to determine whether or not quotas are necessary in the first place. Although a large number of factors exist regarding gender inequality in Parliaments, Nadezhda Shedova effectively argues they can be grouped into three main areas: political, economic, and cultural.<sup>20</sup>

### **Political Factors**

A significant aspect of political equality ideology is a “norm of inclusion”. Iris Marion Young defines ‘inclusion’ as involving everyone who is affected by decisions in the democratic processes and discussions from which decisions are made.<sup>21</sup> Half

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<sup>19</sup> “Women in National Parliaments”. *Inter-Parliamentary Union*. 31 Oct. 2012. Geneva, Switzerland. Web. 25 Nov. 2012.

<sup>20</sup> Shedova, Nadezhda. “Obstacles to Women’s Participation in Parliament.” *Women in Parliament: Beyond Numbers*. (93-110) Julie Ballington and Azza Karam, Eds. Stockholm: International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, 2005. Web 2012.

<sup>21</sup> Young, Iris Marion. “Public Address as a Sign of Political Inclusion”. *On Feminist Ethics and Politics*. Ed. Claudia Card. University Press of Kansas: Kansas, 1999. 103. Web. 2012.

of the world's population is comprised of women and thus it would seem as though democracies worldwide should be representative of such a demographic. In order to understand why such vast inequalities exist between women and men in political systems, we must first take a look at the debate surrounding the "gendered structure" of political systems themselves, and how these structures have worked to compromise the necessary influence of women.

A number of gender scholars recognize there are several political factors that serve as obstacles to women's representation in many areas of formal politics, including Parliament. Anne Marie Goetz states, "low numbers of women in office has led feminists to conclude that women's exclusion is... indicative of fundamentally gendered conditions for political participation which are intrinsic to politics."<sup>22</sup> Similarly, Nadezhda Shvedova argues the prevalence of a traditional, "masculine model" of political life, lack of party support and access to political education, and the overall nature of most electoral systems have all served to exclude women from political bodies.<sup>23</sup>

Throughout several countries in Africa specifically, Gwendolyn Mikell has found that a large number of state leaders have resisted pressures to involve women in political decision-making, simply because they reject women's requests for increased public involvement. Mikell contends that by emphasizing state interests

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<sup>22</sup> Goetz, Anne Marie. "Women's Political Effectiveness." *No Shortcuts to Power: African Women in Politics and Policy Making*. (29-80) New York: Zed Books Ltd., 2003. Print.

<sup>23</sup> Shvedova, Nadezhda, 2005. *Op.cit.*



above all else, governments have a convenient way of ignoring ideological models that support women's arguments for equity and increased opportunities.<sup>24</sup>

Furthermore, throughout much of Sub-Saharan Africa, many states are still extremely fragile in terms of political stability. Mikell believes this creates a dilemma for African women on how to support their community's creation of more structured policies, without ignoring the need to push women's rights to participation in the public arena.<sup>25</sup>

It is important to recognize there are some types of electoral structures that play a larger role in women's recruitment to Parliament than others. For example, the system of elections based on proportional representation (PR) has resulted in three to four times more women being elected in countries with similar political cultures.<sup>26</sup> In PR electoral systems voters choose a candidate from a list provided by each party, and the individual candidate with the most popular vote is elected.<sup>27</sup> In 1999, in African countries with PR systems, women represented an average of 11.65 percent of legislatures, while in African democracies with majority-plurality systems, the average proportion of women in legislatures was 5.46 percent.<sup>28</sup> Richard Matland importantly recognizes that in countries where males dominate the political and economic realm, it is more realistic for a government to change its electoral system to one that is more conducive to electing gender-equal

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<sup>24</sup> Mikell, Gwendolyn. *African Feminism. The Politics of Survival in Sub-Saharan Africa*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press. 1997. Print.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>26</sup> "Party List PR". *Electoral Reform Society*. London, 2012. Web 2012.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>28</sup> Hassim, Shireen. "Representation, Participation, and Democratic Effectiveness: Feminist Challenges to Representative Democracy in South Africa". *No Shortcuts to Power: African Women in Politics and Policy Making*. (81-110) New York: Zed Books Ltd., 2003. Print.

representation, than to try to alter society's cultural view of women, especially if it wants to see fairly quick improvements.<sup>29</sup> The few countries worldwide that have women representing one quarter or more of the national assembly also have PR systems. However, Hassim argues PR alone does not produce gender-balanced legislatures. Factors such as egalitarian political cultures, a strong left-wing party in power that voluntarily adopts gender quotas, or laws that institutionalize gender quotas on party lists are also important factors in enhancing women's Parliamentary representation.<sup>30</sup>

Overall, the majority of feminist scholars agree, the underlying gendered conditions of political participation have worked to continually exclude women from increased formal representation. In several African countries specifically, traditional patriarchal political values combined with fragile state interests that often take precedence over gender interests have worked to exclude women politically. Despite the fact that PR List systems have increased the number of women elected, they have not done so significantly worldwide, as statistics clearly demonstrate. However, underlying gendered conditions of political participation would not exist without cultural and economic values and conditions that have also worked to enforce patriarchal values and exclude women from important decision-making positions.

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<sup>29</sup> Matland, Richard E. "Enhancing Women's Political Participation: Legislative Recruitment and Electoral Systems." *Women in Parliament: Beyond Numbers*. (93-110) Julie Ballington and Azza Karam, Eds. Stockholm: International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, 2005. Print.

<sup>30</sup> Hassim, Shireen, 2003. *Op.cit.*

## Economic Factors

In the majority of countries around the world, women's unpaid labour activity amounts to twice that of men. The monetary value of said labour is estimated to be around one-third of the world's entire economic production (around 13 trillion USD).<sup>31</sup> Worldwide, a woman's average wage is equal to nearly 75 percent of a man's average wage.<sup>32</sup> This significantly large economic gap between women and men represents much more than unequal monetary incomes. Nadezhda Shvedova states, "the social and economic status of women in society has a direct influence on their participation in political institutions and elected bodies"<sup>33</sup>, while Anne Marie Goetz and Shireen Hassim argue it is the structural characteristics of women's positions in social relations that make the women's movement unable to increase influence within the political realm.<sup>34</sup>

Throughout much of the world, women carry a disproportionate share of domestic work, making it extremely difficult to participate in political life. Shvedova also recognizes most women have full-time jobs as wives and mothers as well as full-time careers, so becoming active in politics (as a Member of Parliament, for example) can technically become a third full-time job, and therefore much less of a priority.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Razavi, Shahrashoub. *Gendered Poverty and Well-Being*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd. 2000. Print.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>33</sup> Shvedova, Nadezhda, 2005. *Op.cit.*

<sup>34</sup> Goetz, Anne Marie and Shireen Hassim. *No Shortcuts to Power: African Women in Politics and Policy Making*. New York: Zed Books Ltd., 2003. Print.

<sup>35</sup> Shvedova, Nadezhda, 2005. *Op.cit.*

Meanwhile, Pamela Paxton argues some types of employment (particularly in the formal sector) do indeed provide women with necessary financial resources, and increased opportunities to become politically active. However, in much of the developing world, the necessary financial and institutional capacity-building resources and opportunities for increased experience are extremely hard to come by. Even when resources are available, they are rarely evenly allocated between women and men, and women and other women.<sup>36</sup>

Overall, Shahrashoub Razavi recognizes women's and men's differing levels of access to economic resources greatly reflects the norms which govern distribution and exchange in various institutional areas, causing political and economic factors of gender inequality to be completely intertwined.<sup>37</sup>

Of course, without the 'socialization' of gender through a society's culture, (which refers to the learning of behavior and attitudes considered appropriate for a given sex) these political and economic factors could be completely different. Thus, we must consider the cultural factors that have been enforced by gender socialization, and that have contributed to the underrepresentation of women in political bodies.

### **Cultural Factors**

Ranjana Kumari and Anju Dubey believe the under-representation we see of women in parliaments worldwide is linked to "gender socialization" that has placed

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<sup>36</sup> Paxton, Pamela, Sheri Kunovich and Melanie M. Hughes. "Gender in Politics." *Annual Review of Sociology*. 33.1 (2007) Web 2012.

<sup>37</sup> Razavi, Shahrashoub, 2000. *Op.cit.*

women as traditionally powerless and inferior members of society.<sup>38</sup> Virginia Sapiro believes women do not appear in political life as much as men do, simply because socially, they are not valued and encouraged in politics as much as men.<sup>39</sup>

Kumari and Dubey importantly argue,

“It is not that women do not take part in public life, it is rather that what they do is not categorized as such, and that they raise issues which have not usually been legitimated by the concern and attention of establishment, geared as it is to a masculine view of political priorities.”<sup>40</sup>

Likewise, Paxton, Kunovich, and Hughes all agree far too many cultural barriers to women’s use of their political rights exist, including family resistance and lack of experience and access to resources.<sup>41</sup>

Margaret Conway also recognizes women and men are socialized to two very different roles, which creates a gendered difference in values. Conway believes society assumes women are more compassionate, while men are more competitive and aggressive. Cultural lags may exist because younger citizens are socialized by adults who were themselves socialized in a patriarchal society.<sup>42</sup> Wilma Rule also recognizes it is important to consider the culture of the actual political parties that nominate women for elections. Rule believes right-wing parties tend to have more

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<sup>38</sup> Kumari, Ranjana and Anju Dubey. *Women Parliamentarians: A Study in the Indian Context*. New Delhi: Har-Anand Publications, 1994. Print.

<sup>39</sup> Sapiro, Virginia. *The Political Integration of Women: Roles, Socialization and Politics*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1983. Print.

<sup>40</sup> Kumari, Ranjana and Anju Dubey, 1994. *Op.cit.*

<sup>41</sup> Paxton, Pamela, Sheri Kunovich and Melanie M. Hughes. “Gender in Politics.” *Annual Review of Sociology*. 33.1 (2007) Web 2012.

<sup>42</sup> Conway, M. Margaret, Gertrude A. Steuernagel and David W. Ahern. *Women and Political Participation: Cultural Change in the Political Arena*. Washington: CQ Press, 2005. Print.

“traditional views” of women’s roles and are therefore less likely than left-wing parties to nominate women candidates in the first place.<sup>43</sup>

However, Margaret Conway is confident that as women’s political participation increases, so will women’s consciousness of themselves as a group, regardless of access to resources or socio-cultural norms. Conway believes as an increasing number of women become more educated, they are more likely to be interested in and to participate in politics.<sup>44</sup>

In order to fully contextualize women’s underrepresentation in the formal political realm, we must remember that all three contributing factor areas (political, economic, and cultural) are completely interrelated. As Shahrashoub Razavi argues, resources are acquired differently by women and men through social and political relationships conducted in the various institutional domains that make up a society.<sup>45</sup> It is a combination of factors emanating from values engrained in civil society to resources made available by educational, economic, and political institutions that have ultimately kept women underrepresented in Parliaments around the world. Next, we must consider why this underrepresentation is so significant by understanding women’s representation and participation are necessary within political bodies, and what their current roles tend to be politically.

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<sup>43</sup> Rule, Wilma. “Electoral Systems, Contextual Factors and Women’s Opportunity for Election to Parliamen in Twenty-Three Democracies.” *The Western Political Quarterly*. 40.3 (477-498) Sept. 1987. Web. 2013.

<sup>44</sup> Conway, M. Margaret, Gertrude A. Steuernagel and David W. Ahern, 2005. *Op.cit.*

<sup>45</sup> Razavi, Shahrashoub, 2000. *Op.cit.*

## 2. Women in Politics

“The ability to make decisions and implement them is not a gender-specific trait, but a common human one; it is as natural for a woman to hold power as for a man to hold power.”<sup>46</sup>

As a social category women are not grouped by class, ethnicity, race or geography, but are instead distributed across social categories. This factor alone makes it a challenge for women to organize politically, because constituencies cannot be targeted using class or ethnic-specific concerns.<sup>47</sup> This also means there is an extraordinary degree of diversity amongst women’s interests, causing the task of pushing a “women’s agenda” in policy-making a complex process.

Authors Marianne Githens, Jewel Prestage and Virginia Sapiro all use the concept of ‘marginality’ to analyze women’s subordination within the political realm. All three scholars agree women can bring new, unique, and important perspectives to politics, but because historical marginalization has created splits between public and private spheres of society, women have very rarely been able to do so.<sup>48</sup> ‘Marginality’ is defined as “the state in which one lives in two different worlds simultaneously, where one is a participant in two cultural systems, one of which is, by prevailing standards, regarded as superior to the other.”<sup>49</sup> History has shown a separation of society’s public domain of politics and private domain of the family and domestic life. This public-private split was significant because women remained predominantly within the private sphere, causing the standards of femininity to

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<sup>46</sup> Shvedova, Nadezhda, 2005. *Op.cit.*

<sup>47</sup> Goetz, Anne Marie and Shireen Hassim, 2003. *Op.cit.*

<sup>48</sup> Githens, Marianne and Pippa Norris. “Different Roles, Different Voices: Women and Politics in the United States and Europe.” Joni Lovenduski, Ed. Harpercollins College Div., 1997. Web. 2013.

<sup>49</sup> Sapiro, Virginia, 1983. *Op.cit.*

essentially evolve into private values.<sup>50</sup> Meanwhile, participants in the public domain (or political world) have come to be judged on very different grounds. Thus, women who *do* enter the realm of politics are often evaluated by two different standards; first by standards of femininity (ie. raising a family and participating in domestic life) and second by standards of politics, which Sapiro believes are non-feminine and even “superior to the feminine”.<sup>51</sup> Furthermore, Janet Flammang argues even when women enter top decision-making posts in Parliament, because of a “masculinized political realm”, their positions are often downplayed and their significance as representatives of new and important perspectives are overlooked.<sup>52</sup>

Despite the complexity of the issue of women’s political underrepresentation, the next section seeks to outline the not only significant, but necessary role women can play in Parliaments around the world and more specifically, in Sub-Saharan Africa.

### **The Necessity of Women in Political Bodies**

Women are necessary participants in Parliament for a number of reasons. First and foremost, the equitable inclusion of women strengthens the overall authenticity of democracy.<sup>53</sup> The majority of gender scholars agree increasing the number of women in Parliament creates a form of symbolic equality. While some argue increased female representation can be an end in itself irrespective of

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<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>52</sup> Flammang, Janet A. “Women’s Political Voice in Political Science.” *Women’s Political Voice: How Women are Transforming the Practice and Study of Politics*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1997. Print. Web. 2012.



whether women make a difference, others argue gendered democracy in principle does not include women in practice, which is a significant problem. In other words, if women are equally represented but not equally participating in a manner that furthers women's interests and needs, there is decreased value in having them there in the first place.

Pamela Paxton recognizes the definition of democracy stresses the importance of the participation of all major social groups and argues, "As a major social group, comprising 50 percent of a typical adult population, women are clearly part of a universal suffrage requirement."<sup>54</sup> Thus, democracy as a concept requires the increased participation of women as part of the adult social group that must not be excluded. Similarly, Monique Leyenaar believes by increasing the inclusion of women in Parliamentary systems, principles of equality and the overall democratic character of political bodies can be enhanced.<sup>55</sup> Correspondingly, Robert Dahl, author of *Democracy and Its Critics*, states,

"Throughout the process of making binding decisions, citizens ought to have an adequate opportunity, and an equal opportunity, for expressing their preferences as to the final outcome. They must have adequate and equal opportunities for placing questions on the agenda and for expressing reasons for endorsing one outcome rather than another. To deny any citizen adequate opportunities for effective participation means that because their preferences are unknown or incorrectly perceived, they cannot be taken into account."<sup>56</sup>

Anne Phillips also recognizes the importance of the inclusion of women in enhancing and legitimizing democracy. Phillips believes the entire debate on

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<sup>54</sup> Paxton, Pamela. "Chapter Three: Gendering Democracy." *Politics, Gender, and Concepts. Theory and Methodology*. Ed. Gary Goetz and Amy G. Mazur. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008. 47-70. Print.

<sup>55</sup> Leyenaar, Monique. *Political Empowerment of Women: The Netherlands and Other Countries*. Boston: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 2004. Print.

<sup>56</sup> Dahl, Robert. *Democracy and Its Critics*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989. Print.

democracy has proceeded for centuries as if women were not even present. This is a significant loss to democracy as a whole Phillips argues, as gender can challenge political perspectives and force Parliamentarians to examine positions and concepts from completely new perspectives.<sup>57</sup>

Increasing women Members of Parliament can also result in the use of potential talent and ability. This is a substantive argument proposed by many feminist scholars who argue women should be elected because they represent a “woman’s point of view” with distinct values, attitudes and concerns. Sapiro argues if the “worlds of womanhood and politics” were integrated, political involvement in what are labeled “women’s issues”, would not be as separated as they currently are and women’s legitimacy in government, would increase.<sup>58</sup> In a male-dominated political system (which is the majority around the world), it is difficult to locate women whose gender and resulting social status is irrelevant to their political lives, particularly because of the stereotypes women face. Thus, Iris Young outlines “the full inclusion of women in political democracy entails that individual women, and the gendered perspectives they often express, have a recognized and effective voice in political deliberations that lead to decisions.”<sup>59</sup>

Kumari Ranjana and Anju Dubey make an interesting point that with women’s traditional pre-occupation with the home and family, they can be particularly sensitive to issues and decisions that affect women, children and most

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<sup>57</sup> Phillips, Anne. *Engendering Democracy*. Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1991. Print.

<sup>58</sup> Sapiro, Virginia, 1983. *Op.cit.*

<sup>59</sup> Young, Iris Marion, 1999. *Op.cit.*

aspects of family life. This, Ranjana and Dubey agree, has developed into a presumed association between feminism and peace politics in which “women’s intimate association with childbirth and nurture is said to restore the more appropriate dimensions of politics.”<sup>60</sup> With this idea, the inclusion of women in Parliaments can increase awareness of the implications of war, increased concern for youth, education, and healthcare, and can ground the “abstractions of economic policy” into a more compassionate understanding of daily need.<sup>61</sup> Throughout developing countries where civil unrest and poverty are affluent and affect many on a day-to-day basis, this could be particularly beneficial.

However, it is important at this point to recognize just because women can bring a perspective of unique experiences and interests to the realm of politics, does not mean they always will. Studies concerning gender representation in politics in India carried out in the 1990s and 2000s found women politicians are more likely than men to act pro-women by prioritizing gender equality. However, political and party constraints (such as voting discipline) often cause women MPs to surrender their feminist points of view.<sup>62</sup>

With this, Powley recognizes it is extremely important to recall women are a diverse social group, and it is therefore problematic to consider all women as a single constituency.<sup>63</sup> In several countries throughout Africa that have experienced an increase in women MPs due to quota laws, Powley believes there seems to be a

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<sup>60</sup> Phillips, Anne, 1991. *Op.cit.*

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>62</sup> Kumari, Ranjana and Anju Dubey, 1994. *Op.cit.*

<sup>63</sup> Powley, Elizabeth. “Rwanda: Women Hold Up Half the Parliament.” *Women in Parliament: Beyond Numbers*. Stockholm: International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, 2004. Print.

consensus among most women representatives regarding the enhancement of women's needs and rights. However, Powley argues in a mature democracy "women disagree on policies and desired political outcomes, even those which directly affect women's access to power."<sup>64</sup> In countries such as Rwanda and South Africa this has yet to become a problem because the increased involvement of women Parliamentarians is new and appears to be supported by the women's movement, causing little public dissent between women.<sup>65</sup> If however, these countries continue to develop and maintain their gender quotas, Powley see this becoming a very plausible problem for the future. Phillips however, argues all women share at least one common interest; they need improved access to every sphere in society, and this is particularly the case in developing countries. Beyond this, it is difficult to assume shared interests amongst women, but Phillips believes perhaps this one significant interest is enough to bring women politicians together to work toward similar goals of equality.<sup>66</sup>

In the following chapters, what will become evident is that women parliamentarian's abilities to work together on shared interests regarding pushing women-focused policy is dependant on a number of influencing factors that are unique to the country's social, political, and cultural history. What will be seen in Rwanda is that women MPs have indeed been able to mobilize resources and push policies based on several common interests, but this is due to a number of factors unique to Rwanda's history including genocide and a strong women's movement.

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<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>66</sup> Phillips, Anne, 1991. *Op.cit.*

Overall, what is clear is that women's increased representation and participation in political bodies is necessary, not only to enhance democracy by increasing the participation of a major group in society, but also to provide political systems with new potential talents, abilities, and unique perspectives. Although women politicians may not necessarily act in the interest of empowering women, the likelihood is increased when women's formal representation increases, which can have vast implications for gender equality.

### **Women's Current Roles in Parliament**

As has been made clear, women are underrepresented in political systems worldwide, which creates a significant problem not only democratically, but in the enhancement of women's rights and gender equality as a whole. Some gender scholars and political scientists argue issues such as childcare, sexuality and family planning, (which have all traditionally been predominantly confined to the private sphere) have increasingly become visible as legitimate political issues since women began entering the political sphere.<sup>67</sup> However, Anne Phillips argues in most cases, the needs and interests of women have been overlooked by political parties, even when women are represented.<sup>68</sup> Likewise, Vicky Randall argues, more must be known about the priorities and behaviour of women politicians before feminists can

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<sup>67</sup> Leyenaar, Monique, 2004. *Op.cit.*

<sup>68</sup> Phillips, Anne, 1991. *Op.cit.*

truly decide if there is real significance in increasing their representative numbers in Parliaments.<sup>69</sup>

Despite the fact that women Parliamentarians have added some unique and needed perspectives to the political realm in some instances, currently, an extreme lack of upward mobility for women in Parliaments has become very clear in research on women in the political sphere.<sup>70</sup> For example, in 1999, the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) extensively interviewed over 200 women politicians from over 65 different countries, to gather primary data regarding women's reflections on their roles in politics. The findings of the interviews are compiled into general issues in a report by Dr. Marilyn Waring, Gaye Greenwood, and Christine Pintat. Throughout the report summarizing the findings, it becomes clear a number of women politicians experience some form of marginalization in parliamentary procedures. Furthermore, many interviewees felt that legislation presented by women (even if it was not legislation *regarding* women) was very difficult to negotiate with male colleagues.<sup>71</sup> Many women interviewed also recognized their actual political ranking or position of power was crucial when trying to participate in the policy-making process. Waring, Greenwood, and Pintat reiterate, "power rather than critical mass was important."<sup>72</sup> Likewise, in a study of women MPs throughout Europe, Joni Lovenduski interprets women's differentiations in political power as a form of 'gatekeeping' whereby the very few women appointed to

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<sup>69</sup> Randall, Vicky. "Gender and Democracy". *Institute for Democracy and Conflict Resolution*. (1-10) 2011. Web. 2013.

<sup>70</sup> Goetz, Anne Marie, 2003. *Op.cit.*

<sup>71</sup> Waring, Dr. Marilyn, Gaye Greenwood, and Christine Pintat. "Politics: Women's Insight." *Inter-Parliamentary Union*. (1-195) 2000. Web. 2013.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*

ministerial positions essentially are put in “less important” jobs.<sup>73</sup> Meg Russell (who has co-authored works regarding women in Parliament with Lovenduski) believes this is a problem, because “for women to gain real influence they also need to be represented within positions of power inside assemblies.”<sup>74</sup>

Alternatively, Shireen Hassim argues women MPs can and do acquire formal accountability and enhance women’s agendas in Parliament, only if they are well organized. Hassim believes when political parties adopt women’s sections (of which women MPs should be active members) they can play a significant role in articulating the interests of women’s movements, and ensure women’s interests are addressed within their party.<sup>75</sup>

It has become apparent that even when women are represented in Parliaments, many ideological and institutional barriers remain that do not necessarily allow for the effective promotion of women-focused policy and gender equality in the policy-making process. Ultimately, this thesis will seek to understand whether the increased number of women parliamentarians in Rwanda has affected the number and effectiveness of women-focused laws and policies the Rwandan government has put forth in recent years. First, we must examine the literature surrounding the debate on how women’s political representation can be increased and why quotas have become such a popular mechanism.

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<sup>73</sup> Russell, Meg. “Women’s Representation in Elected Office Today.” *Women’s Political Participation in the UK*. (18-35) Web. 2013.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>75</sup> Hassim, Shireen, 2003. *Op.cit.*

In the following section of the literature review, the necessity and effectiveness of Parliamentary gender quotas will be explored. Moving into this section, it is important to understand that significant pressures from international organizations and treaties that have advocated women's empowerment through increased political representation as well as women's movements have played a prominent role in pressuring governments to adopt quotas.

### **Increasing Representation- Why Quotas?**

Drude Dahlerup believes the decision to introduce a Parliamentary gender quota is increasingly influenced by recommendations from international organizations and treaties.<sup>76</sup> Two extremely significant treaties that have both been established by the United Nations are the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security.

CEDAW was adopted by the United Nations in 1979 and currently has over 19 signatory countries around the world. It has been a continuous advocate for equal participation of women and men in public life and has continually promoted increased leadership in decision-making and leadership positions for women. Often described as an international bill of rights for women, CEDAW defines what constitutes discrimination against women and sets up a national agenda for international action to end gender inequity. CEDAW is one of the first international

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<sup>76</sup> Dahlerup, Drude. "Increasing Women's Political Representation: New Trends in Gender Quotas." *Women in Parliament: Beyond Numbers*. 73-92. Stockholm: International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, 2004. Print.



conventions to bridge the gap between civil, political, and socio-economic rights, recognizing that all three play a role in determining levels of gender equality in not only the realm of formal politics, but society as a whole. The convention specifically outlines that in order to ensure real equality, issues of power relations, socially constructed roles and traditions and people's perceptions must all be addressed.<sup>77</sup> Countries that have ratified the convention are legally bound to put its provisions into practice and to move beyond "de jure" equality to ensure equality of results.

UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security was adopted in October 2000, and was the first formal and legal document passed by the Security Council requiring conflict and post-conflict states to actively support women's participation in peace negotiations. Similar to CEDAW, Resolution 1325 outlines the significance of gender-equal participation in formal political decision-making.<sup>78</sup> In 1995, the UN Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing regenerated pressures for gender equality that had originally begun under CEDAW's provisions.<sup>79</sup>

In a 2007 report regarding the advancement of gender equality, the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) recognized that both CEDAW and UN Security Council Resolution 1325 serve as powerful tools in ensuring the realization of actual gender equality, especially in post-conflict environments. Although the provisions of CEDAW and UN Security Council Resolution 1325 have

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<sup>77</sup> "Advancing Gender Equality Using CEDAW and UN Security Council Resolution 1325." United Nations Development Fund for Women. 2009. Web 2012.

<sup>78</sup> Ballington, Julie, 2005. *Op.cit.*

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*

clearly been significant in governments' adoption of Parliamentary gender quotas, it is necessary to understand the influence strong women's movements have had as well.

Although some feminist scholars argue the contemporary women's movement is a global phenomenon, Diane Margolis points out the significance of recognizing that within each country "the [women's] movement follows a distinctive course, developing structures and agendas in response to local circumstances."<sup>80</sup> Varying political, economic and cultural factors seriously affect the degree to which women's movements operate and influence policy and legislation. Margolis believes women's movements that *have* been successful in pushing a government to adopt a parliamentary gender quota have been clearly identifiable, historically strong, and have mobilized to demand women's inclusion.<sup>81</sup>

In a study of gender quotas and Latin America, Par Zetterberg uses an example of Argentina in the 1960s and 70s to explain how significant the role of women's movements are in influencing a government to adopt a gender quota.<sup>82</sup> In Argentina throughout the 1960s and 70s, a strong women's movement had been openly opposed to various forms of military dictatorships. In the post-dictatorship years of what Zetterberg calls 'redemocratization', these women found themselves marginalized and severely underrepresented in Parliament, even though some of them had previously been the leaders in ridding dictators and undemocratic

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<sup>80</sup> Margolis, Diane Rothbard. "Women's Movements Around the World: Cross Cultural Comparisons." *Gender and Society*. 7.3. (Sept. 1993) 379. Sage Publications Inc. Web 2012.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>82</sup> Zetterberg, Peter. "Do Gender Quotas Foster Women's Political Engagement? Lessons from Latin America." *Political Research Quarterly*. (62.4) P. 715-730. Sage Publications. Dec. 2009. Web. 2013.

regimes. At this point, the Argentinean women's movement began to lobby the government to adopt a quota because they were united by a cause and motivated to ensure they gained the political representation they deserved.<sup>83</sup> In chapter four, it will become apparent that similar to Argentina, the women's movement in Rwanda was also both united and motivated by historical events that were unique to the country to push the government toward adopting a Parliamentary gender quota.

All in all, it is clear that international treaties combined with pressures from women's movements have significantly influenced the increased adoption of gender quotas around the world. However, it is troubling so many countries have begun to adopt gender quotas, yet worldwide women's representation in Parliaments remains less than 20 percent. In countries where quotas have been successful at increasing the representation of women, it is questionable whether women have become active participants in Parliamentary bodies and whether or not they have truly been able to push women-focused policies. In many countries with Parliamentary gender quotas, the overall effect on gender equality is largely unknown, because gender quotas in general, are a fairly new concept. However, the purpose of this thesis is to fill the gap in the literature regarding the qualitative success of gender quotas through a case study of Rwanda. The next section will explore the current literature that debates the theories, motives and possibilities of Parliamentary gender quotas.

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<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*

### 3. Parliamentary Gender Quotas

Currently worldwide, almost every instance where women exceed 15 percent of elected representative bodies is the result of the application of special measures to advantage some women candidates over men, the majority of which has been through quotas.<sup>84</sup> As we are now aware, the recent increase in gender quotas in both developed and underdeveloped countries over the past 15 years has raised a large debate regarding notions of equality and empowerment. However, the majority of scholars agree countries that have adopted gender quotas have done so for very different reasons. While some argue the perception that women are 'better' at reconciliation and promoting processes of peace has been a strong motivation for introducing quotas, others find it has simply been a way for governments to gain increased national and international support.<sup>85</sup>

There are three main types of gender quotas that governments implement around the world. The first is a candidate quota, which outlines a minimum percentage of candidates for an election that must be women, second is a reserved seat quota, which specifies (in a constitution or by legislation) a certain number of seats for women among representatives, and third are gender-neutral quotas, which for example specify that neither gender should occupy more than 60 percent or less than 40 percent of positions on a party list.<sup>86</sup>

This section will present the theoretical debate regarding the implementation of quotas by reviewing liberal views of Equality of Opportunity and feminist views of

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<sup>84</sup> Goetz, Anne Marie, 2003. *Op.cit.*

<sup>85</sup> Powley, Elizabeth, 2003. *Op.cit.*

<sup>86</sup> Dahlerup, Drude, 2004. *Op.cit.*

Equality of Result. This theoretical debate will lead into an analysis and discussion of the motivating factors behind gender quotas. Next, the debate surrounding notions of empowerment will be analyzed and discussed through the theoretical lens of liberalism and feminism. Whether or not quotas have effectively promoted and enhanced not only the representation of women, but their interests and ability to influence change in key discussions and policy-making is widely contested, as is the influence of the nature of the state in adopting quotas and enhancing empowerment.

### **Theoretical Debate**

As has become clear, women are politically underrepresented on a worldwide scale due to a number of factors. Within feminist literature and policy-making a large theoretical debate exists on how to go about the changes that are necessary to increase fair political inclusion of both genders. Liberal Equality as a theory has been a more common approach for the majority of policy-makers, as it views women and men as equals and therefore aims to provide equal opportunities for both genders. Meanwhile, Equality of Result acknowledges the differences between women and men and aims at ensuring actual equality. The debate between the two theories is strong as both purport distinct but valid notions of equality.

Liberal Equality involves removing the formal and “unfair” barriers that women or men experience in everyday life. Women and men are understood as equals and thus, should be treated the same way under the same set of standards. For example, advocates of this theory believe giving women the right to vote is

necessary, but the rest is up to the individual.<sup>87</sup> Many gender scholars are critical of this theoretical view and argue opportunities for men and women are very seldom equal, especially in developing countries so there is no real equality of opportunity to begin with.

Meanwhile, Equality of Result is a theoretical view that recognizes the differences between women and men and works to address these differences to ensure actual equality results. Scholars supporting this view argue simply removing barriers women or men experience does not create real, equal opportunities.<sup>88</sup> The goal of Equality of Result is to ensure equal access, but recognizes the need for special steps to ensure equality is the final result between women and men. Supporters of this theory therefore believe gender quotas are necessary to ensure women and their interests are fairly represented in decision-making, and will improve the overall quality of governance.<sup>89</sup>

Supporters of Liberal Equality view Equality of Result as an unfair equal redistribution of goods and values to people who have not proved they deserve what they are getting. Many liberal theorists such as Carol Bacchi argue it is wrong call affirmative action measures exceptions to anti-discrimination measures, by labeling them “positive discrimination”.<sup>90</sup> Due to the critiques of gender quotas as questionable forms of discrimination, an increasing number of countries are now

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<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>89</sup> Grown, Karen, Geeta Rao Gupta, Aslihan Kes. “Taking Action: Achieving Gender Equality and Empowering Women.” *UN Millennium Project, Task Force on Education and Gender Equality*. London, 2005. Web 2012.

<sup>90</sup> Bacchi, Carol Lee. “The Politics of Affirmative Action. Women, Equality, and Category Politics.” Sage Publications, 1996. Print.

repealing quota measures on the grounds that they are unconstitutional. When quota cases have been brought to court, judges tend to justify the removal of quota systems by referring to existing principles of equality.<sup>91</sup>

However, many quota advocates maintain that historically, as well as currently in much of the developing world, chances are not equal for women as long as male standards are the norms for most forms of competition within society.<sup>92</sup> A difference in treatment between men and women is therefore deemed necessary not because of women's inherently different qualities, but because of the discriminatory characteristics of the political institutions with which women must deal.<sup>93</sup> Thus, affirmative action through the implementation of quotas is considered necessary for gender equality within formal political systems to increase.

This theoretical debate has had a large impact on the adoption and implementation of parliamentary gender quotas. Krook argues the controversies and debate surrounding action for gender equality has affected not only the likelihood of quotas being adopted, but also the form they take and the effectiveness of their implementation.<sup>94</sup> A party or government's theoretical values can greatly influence the decision to not only adopt a quota, but can also effect the success of the quota in increasing representation as well. Although underlying theories are

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<sup>91</sup> Powley, Elizabeth, 2003. *Op.cit.*

<sup>92</sup> Dahlerup, Drude, 2004. *Op.cit.*

<sup>93</sup> Fineman, Martha L. "Implementing Equality: Ideology, Contradiction and Social Change- A Study of Rhetoric and Results in the Regulation of the Consequences of Divorce." *Wisconsin Law Review*, 1983. Print.

<sup>94</sup> Krook, Mona Lena. "Gender Quotas, Norms and Politics." *Politics and Gender: Gender Quotas II*. 2.1 (2006): 110-118. Washington University. Web 2012.

significant, they are not the only factors that shape the adoption and implementation of gender quotas, as will be seen in the following sub-sections.

### **“Positive Discrimination” or International Approval?**

Scholars who view Parliamentary gender quotas as beneficial in promoting gender equality such as Judith Kanakuze, argue quotas can allow for the participation of women at the grassroots level which provides input into policy and government initiatives from the bottom-up. Kanakuze states, “It is a matter of social justice to support equal access for men and women in regard to participation, resources, control, and decision-making. Transformations will occur gradually, as gender is integrated at every level.”<sup>95</sup>

Similarly, Lisa Baldez believes quotas can act as form of “positive discrimination”. For most advocates, gender quotas aim to achieve equality of result so they are referred to a form of discriminating positively in favour of underrepresented individuals who as a group, hold common characteristics.<sup>96</sup> Baldez argues Parliamentary gender quotas can provide and “exogenous shock” to the masculinized nature of politics, which can release the cultural norms, which as we know, have associated politics with men. Thus, she believes gender quotas can and do make a positive and significance for women.<sup>97</sup> Likewise, Susan Franceschet believes the majority of political parties, especially in much of the developing world

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<sup>95</sup> Kanakuze, Judith. “The Challenge of Implementation and Enforcement in Rwanda.” *The Implementation of Quotas: African Experiences*. South Africa: Quota Series Report, 2004. Print.

<sup>96</sup> Norris, Pippa. “Breaking the Barriers: Positive Discrimination Policies for Women.” *Has Liberalism Failed Women? Parity, Quotas and Political Representation*. Jyette Klausen and Charles S. Maier, Eds. New York: St. Martin’s Press. P. 1-31. 2000. Web. 2013.

<sup>97</sup> Baldez, Lisa, 2006. *Op.cit.*



where patriarchal values are prominent, have simply been unwilling to include more women, so the ends justify the means when it comes to establishing a quota.<sup>98</sup>

Medha Nanivadekar is also a supporter of gender quotas and believes they are justified simply because they recognize and enforce the individual's intrinsic and inalienable right to power, resources, participation and opportunities. Nanivadekar believes it is important that quotas are female-centered because most women, particularly in developing countries, have a history of exclusion. If women are involved in the very process of creating and implementing a gender quota, they are more likely to want to become politically involved.<sup>99</sup>

However, Anne Phillips importantly recognizes critics of quotas view them as a form of *reductio ad absurdum*<sup>100</sup> and question how far the principle of proportionality should go. They argue if women are given an advantage, should not too students, the unemployed, and every religious, racial and linguistic minority be elected to reflect their proportion in society?<sup>101</sup>

Regardless of whether or not Parliamentary gender quotas are a form of positive discrimination or just discrimination, the international community tends to support them especially in developing countries, because they are a "modern" development. As was previously discussed, international treaties such as CEDAW and UN Security Council Resolutions have played an important role in various governments' decisions to adopt quotas. Due to international support of quotas,

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<sup>98</sup> Goetz, Anne Marie, 2003. *Op.cit.*

<sup>99</sup> Nanivadekar, Medha. "Are Quotas a Good Idea? The Indian Experience with Reserved Seats for Women." *Politics and Gender: Gender Quotas II*. 2.1 (2006) 121. Web 2012.

<sup>100</sup> A proposition with an inevitably absurd and illogical conclusion.

<sup>101</sup> Phillips, Anne, 1991. *Op.cit.*

Paxton, Kunovich, and Hughes all argue many international institutions and aid agencies are much more likely to provide larger amounts of monetary aid to countries initiating gender quotas.<sup>102</sup> Thus, it is questionable whether gender quotas are implemented as a means of fairness in participation and enhancing gender equality, or to simply gain increased access to approval, aid and resources.

Drude Dahlerup argues many countries adopt quotas because they are favourable to their international image and adds to the legitimacy of the regime in power. Dahlerup states, “the growing importance of a country’s international image can thus lead to some changes in the overwhelming male dominance of politics.”<sup>103</sup> Jennie Burnet argues for many governments, gender quotas are simply a symbol of inclusion that is satisfactory with foreign aid ideas and do not actually provide grassroots structures with the ability to promote the will of locals from the bottom-up.<sup>104</sup> Furthermore, some scholars argue such policies are often little more than an exercise in “image management”. In some institutions, quotas and other gender mainstreaming and equality measures are more of a bureaucratic exercise than a means of real change.<sup>105</sup> Burnet believes this is a problem that will likely remain unfixed. The international community and key decision makers such as the World Bank, IMF, UN and United States have supported many systems of government that

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<sup>102</sup> Paxton, Pamela, Sheri Kunovich and Melanie M. Hughes, 2007. *Op.cit.*

<sup>103</sup> Dahlerup, Drude, 2004. *Op.cit.*

<sup>104</sup> Burnet, Jennie E. “Gender Balance and the Meanings of Women in Governance in Post-Genocide Rwanda.” *African Affairs*. 107.428. (May 2008): 361-386. Web 2012.

<sup>105</sup> True, Jacqui. “Mainstreaming Gender in International Institutions.” *Gender Matters in Global Politics: A Feminist Introduction to International Relations*. 189-203. Ed. Laura J. Shephard. Routledge, 2010.

have implemented quotas, particularly in the developing world, without an effective analysis of the implementation and adverse outcomes.<sup>106</sup>

Overall, the motivation for adopting gender quotas is important not only because it effects the adoption and type of quota, but also because it sets the stage for the form the quota takes within government and civil society, and the overall effectiveness of its implementation. The following sub-sections will address the debate regarding the qualitative effectiveness of gender quotas, beginning with the nature of the state.

### **Nature of the State**

A large portion of the literature regarding the effectiveness of gender quotas has debated the system of government under which gender quota systems function, especially in the developing world. Although gender quotas are introduced in all kinds of political systems, they are introduced most frequently in countries with increasing levels of democracy. While 55 percent of democratic countries have adopted some form of gender quota, only 38 percent of non-democratic countries have.<sup>107</sup>

The status of a country's form of government is crucial to the implementation and application of its gender quota, and directly affects the inclusion and participation of women. Goetz argues, "The way reservation or quota systems are applied makes the difference between a token 'presence' of women in politics and a

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<sup>106</sup> Burnet, Jennie E., 2008. *Op.cit.*

<sup>107</sup> Dahlerup, Drude. "Electoral Gender Quotas: Between Equality of Opportunity and Equality of Result." *Representation Vol. 43 No. 2*. London: Routledge, 2007. Print.

more legitimate and substantial form of participation.”<sup>108</sup> Likewise, Pamela Paxton recognizes, “women’s presence in high numbers may be less meaningful if they are unable to truly affect policy.”<sup>109</sup>

Unfortunately throughout many developing countries Paxton’s fear is a reality, because regardless of the adoption of a gender quota, when the state acts undemocratically and inhibits MPs and all citizen’s rights, women, an already marginalized social group within the realm of politics, do not stand a chance at having their voices heard. This section will provide a comparative perspective predominantly between democratic and authoritarian governments that have implemented gender quotas and the debate in the literature on the advantages and disadvantages for women’s participation. For the purposes of this section, democracy is defined as a system under which individuals enjoy equality and freedom and the principles of the government emerge by the consent of the people.<sup>110</sup> Authoritarianism will be characterized as a system under which emphasis is placed on the authority of the few who rule the state through rigidity, ambiguity and intolerance.<sup>111</sup>

Helen Hintjens argues history and current events show the main goal of many governments throughout Africa is to remain in power by disabling all opponents and critics in civil society, a characteristic of authoritarianism. Hintjens believes the political climate of many African countries has deteriorated due to frequent

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<sup>108</sup> Goetz, Anne Marie, 2003. *Op.cit.*

<sup>109</sup> Paxton, Pamela, Sheri Kunovich and Melanie M. Hughes, 2007. *Op.cit.*

<sup>110</sup> Almond, Gabriel A. and Sidney Verba. “The Civic Culture: Political Attitudes and Democracy in Five Nations.” California: Sage Publications. 1989. Print.

<sup>111</sup> Eckhart, William. “Authoritarianism.” *Political Psychology*. 12.1. (March 1991) P 97-124. Web 2012.

disappearances of opposition politicians.<sup>112</sup> She argues it is clear governments with authoritarian characteristics are less likely to implement gender quotas to empower women and instead use them as a means of maintaining authoritative power.<sup>113</sup>

Lisa Baldez is highly critical of gender quotas for a number of reasons. First, she argues the historical exclusion of women from politics combines with gender norms portraying women as naturally altruistic and serving others, so women are perceived as “politically pure” and “immune to corruption”. Unethical political parties therefore find electing more women to office seems a logical way to improve the legitimacy of their regime. Baldez argues this example shows the election of more women to office via gender quotas can falsely revitalize civil society’s faith in the political system.<sup>114</sup> Furthermore, Baldez argues if a gender quota exists in an undemocratic system of government, gender laws can strengthen processes of candidate nomination that are already highly centralized and unfair. In such a situation, quotas still introduce new players to the political arena but make them play according to old rules. In other words, women may be brought into Parliament, but the dynamics of the political process remain the same.<sup>115</sup>

Clearly, authoritarian government regimes are not as conducive to enhancing women’s participation in Parliament through a gender quota. Medha Nanivadekar considers the broader picture and is concerned with the *sustainability* of women’s representation in institutions of governance. If women’s roles continue to increase

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<sup>112</sup> Charles, Nickie and Helen Hintjens, Eds. *Gender, Ethnicity and Political Ideologies*. London: Routledge, 1998. Print.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>114</sup> Baldez, Lisa, 2006. *Op.cit.*

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*

and develop in countries such as Rwanda or South Africa, eventually equal gender representation should become sustainable so that quota systems are no longer needed. With this, the risk Nanivadekar recognizes is that when gender quota systems become legislation, they can be introduced or withdrawn at any time, through the simple will of the state.<sup>116</sup> This is particularly an issue for women quota representatives in countries throughout Africa, where many democratic governments are relatively new and still developing. Goetz also fears that women's representation could end as quickly as it began because gender equity goals can easily arouse social resistance due to their ability to challenge the rights of powerful actors. In efforts to maintain authoritative power, an authoritarian government can at any time, terminate the conditions of gender quotas as well as any equity laws that have resulted from increased women's representation.<sup>117</sup>

So far, criticism of governments implementing quotas has focused mainly on those with authoritarian characteristics. However, Nadezhda Shvedova argues that even in a fully democratic setting, gender quotas are not enough to fully enhance women's participation and gender equality in policy-making. Shvedova believes civil societies (including NGOs and women's groups) must play a large role and have a healthy working relationship with women in government in order for the true advancement women's participation and empowerment to occur. She states,

“In order to empower women and enable them to participate in politics, it is necessary to extend the scope of women's participation at the grassroots

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<sup>116</sup> Nanivadekar, Medha, 2006. *Op.cit.*

<sup>117</sup> Goetz, Anne Marie, 2003. *Op.cit.*

level and in local elected bodies. This also constitutes an important step towards confidence-building and facilitates the sharing of experiences.”<sup>118</sup>

Clearly, the effectiveness of gender quotas depends not only on the nature of the state that has adopted the quota, but on the strength of women’s civil society organizations, as well as women MPs’ willingness to cooperate with them. In Rwanda it will become apparent women’s grassroots organizations throughout civil society have played an extremely significant role in the overall effectiveness and success of women MPs.

This leads us to the debate on whether quotas have not only enabled increased political representation for women, but whether or not represented women are actively promoting women’s agendas in policy-making and legislation.

### **Increased Representation versus Increased Empowerment**

President of the International Center for Research on Women, Geeta Raugupta believes quotas can be effective and are a necessary step to allow women to increase political participation. However, Raugupta is firm in stating quotas are just the first step in what is a long road to equality because they only guarantee representation, not that women will actually participate in decision-making.<sup>119</sup> Because the phenomenon of parliamentary gender quotas is so new, little research has been done to measure the influence quota-elected women MPs have had in decision-making and pushing women’s agendas.

After conducting several interviews with female members of Parliament in countries throughout Africa, Claire Devlin and Robert Elgie found that women’s

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<sup>118</sup> Shvedova, Nadezhda, 2005. *Op.cit.*

<sup>119</sup> “Gender Quotas in Latin America”. CBC Radio: The Current. March 5, 2010.

economic advancement and solidarity emerged as many women MP's main policy priorities.<sup>120</sup> Devlin and Elgie believe women MPs seem to be at least somewhat successful in promoting female solidarity within parliament, as many women MPs stated that they placed the pursuit of positive improvements for women over both party politics and other policy agendas. Several female politicians who were interviewed said that the process of gaining an increased voice in parliament has been much easier because "women have been many".<sup>121</sup>

It is also significant to recognize while gender quotas are intended to increase representation, elected women will not necessarily form together to promote women's rights and gender equality. Most methods of bringing more women into office have been designed to overcome voter hostility to women and to challenge masculinized political systems, but these endeavors are not designed to create connections between women politicians, and civil society's women's movements.<sup>122</sup> Mona Lena Krook recognizes women who are elected through quotas may not necessarily pursue women-friendly policy changes that actually emphasize women's empowerment and gender equality. Krook argues it is important to remember that these policy measures are not feminist quotas, but gender quotas, or more specifically, sex quotas.<sup>123</sup> Furthermore, they do not necessarily seek significant change in policy outcomes, but simply aim to increase the number of women in the

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<sup>120</sup> Devlin, Claire and Robert Elgie. "The Effect of Increased Women's Representation in Parliament: The Case of Rwanda." *Parliamentary Affairs*. 61.2 (Feb. 2008): 237-254. Oxford Journals. Web 2012.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>122</sup> Goetz, Anne Marie and Shireen Hassim, 2003. *Op.cit.*

<sup>123</sup> Krook, Mona Lena, 2006. *Op.cit.*



system.<sup>124</sup> Similarly, Lisa Baldez argues women tend to serve the interests of their political party rather than women's interests specifically.<sup>125</sup> Instead of branching out and working with women from other parties to promote and enhance gender equity-related goals, many female politicians will instead tow the party line. Baldez uses the example of quotas in India where one third of seats in local congress are set aside for women. However, she recognizes India's quota law is applied at random to certain districts in any given election, and women are doing just as well in districts where quotas are not applied.<sup>126</sup> This leads Baldez to question if quotas are truly the solution to enhancing women's voice and equality within parliaments.

Krook also argues quotas can very easily delegitimize women MPs as independent, worthy political actors, because they are essentially being forced into a system as "quota representatives". In most parliaments that have adopted quotas, Powley believes the delegitimization of female politicians is evident through the obvious status differences between seats reserved for women and seats gained in open competition with men.<sup>127</sup> This was also apparent in the IPU's report where over 200 women politicians were interviewed and expressed they were more often than not assigned to ministerial posts "less powerful" than those assigned to their male counterparts.<sup>128</sup>

As previously discussed, women's movements in some countries have been an integral factor in advocating and promoting gender quotas. However, it is widely

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<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>125</sup> Baldez, Lisa, 2006. *Op.cit.*

<sup>126</sup> "Gender Quotas in Latin America". CBC Radio: The Current. March 5, 2010.

<sup>127</sup> Powley, Elizabeth, 2004. *Op.cit.*

<sup>128</sup> Waring, Dr. Marilyn, Gaye Greenwood, and Christine Pintat. "Politics: Women's Insight." *Inter-Parliamentary Union*. (1-195) 2000. Web. 2013.

believed in the past decade, women's movements in general have demobilized, which has had a detrimental effect on women politicians' abilities to promote women's agendas. The apparent demobilization has resulted in fewer women MPs who have long and deep connections to women's organizations. Hassim argues "without the moral and political pressure from outside Parliament, the danger exists that women MPs are unable (or increasingly unwilling) to represent the various interests of women adequately."<sup>129</sup> Without strong mechanisms for upholding accountability, especially from women's civil society organizations and groups, women's increased representation "carries little power to advance the agenda of gender equality."<sup>130</sup>

Overall, Jennie Burnet states,

"Discussions about female political participation in [places like] post-genocide Rwanda tend to assume that increased participation by women will lead to greater gender equality and a 'better' more peaceful society, yet these changes have not necessarily increased the political power of women or led to more egalitarian notions of citizenship."<sup>131</sup>

## **Conclusion**

Through this literature it has become clear due to historical social, economic, and political factors, women are underrepresented in parliaments worldwide. This is a problem because women's formal political representation is necessary to increase the recognition of women's interests, promote empowering equality-focused legislation, and enhance democracy as a whole. This chapter has made the importance of understanding the debate surrounding quotas and their usefulness in

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<sup>129</sup> Goetz, Anne Marie and Shireen Hassim, 2003. *Op.cit.*

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>131</sup> Burnet, Jennie E., 2008. *Op.cit.*

enhancing gender equality clear. With the case study of Rwanda, it will be necessary to understand the history of the development of the quota and what the government's motives for adapting it were in order to effectively measure its success.

The lack of gender equality in parliaments worldwide suggests quotas although controversial, are a form of affirmative action and have potential to serve as an effective mechanism for increasing women's political representation. Where the gap in the literature exists is with regard to the actual effectiveness of increases in political women representatives. Feminist scholars and political scientists alike agree that qualitative research must still be done regarding the effectiveness of gender quotas beyond increased representation. The question now is what effect (if any) can quota-elected representatives have on gender equality in their respective countries?

The ideas and research put forth by all scholars referenced throughout the previous section has provided us with an idea of what to expect in the case of Rwanda. We now know factors including the nature of the state, women's movements, and cultural preferences of political parties and society can all play significant roles in the adaptation and success of a gender quota. What we will find in the following chapters is, since the enactment of a Parliamentary gender quota and significant increase of women MPs, women-focused legislation and policies have increased and slowly begun to impact gender equality within Rwanda. However, it is a number of factors along with the quota, including a historically strong women's

movement that have empowered and motivated the successes of these women leaders.

#### **4. Methodology**

For the purposes of this research, a single case study of Rwanda will be used as a distinct unit of analysis to observe women parliamentarians and their ability and willingness to promote women's issues and advance women-focused legislation and policies. The advantage of using a case study is that it allows for the grounding of observations and concepts and will provide the study of parliamentary gender quotas with a more holistic perspective.<sup>132</sup>

For the purposes of this study, I traveled to Kigali, Rwanda in April 2010 to conduct interviews, record observations, and attend an international conference organized by Rwanda's Forum of Women Parliamentarians (called the International Forum on the Role of Leadership in Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment). For six weeks I conducted open-ended interviews with Rwandan women MPs, representatives of women-focused government-led initiatives including the Gender Monitoring Office, and various members of women's-based development organizations. The information collected from these interviews as well as from conference sessions will be presented in chapters three through five.

Information from members of grassroots women's-based organizations provided insight on women's issues and agendas, and also provided feedback regarding the role of women MPs, coming from someone other than the women MPs

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<sup>132</sup> Yin, Robert K. "Case Study Research: Design and Methods". Beverly Hills: SAGE Publications, 1984. Print.

themselves. Four interviews were conducted with the Country Director of Action Aid Rwanda, the National Secretary of Rwanda's largest women's-based umbrella organization *Pro-Femmes*, the Project Coordinator of Rwanda's own women-focused Agaseke Project, and a Gender Specialist at UNIFEM Rwanda. Interviews were open-ended, and an outline of the question guide for members of these NGOs can be found in Appendix 1.

Meanwhile, interviews with women MPs provided valuable, first-hand insight on their roles, as well as their goals for gender equality in policy-making and development as a whole. Five women MPs were interviewed along with a member of Rwanda's Gender Monitoring Office, the Director of Protocol in Parliament, and several other members of Rwanda's women-focused government-led initiatives, that for confidentiality requests, will remain unnamed. Similar to interviews with members of women's-based organizations, interviews with women MPs were open-ended, and an outline of the interview guide can be found in Appendix 2.

The international conference I attended on May 17 and 18 in Kigali called 'The Role of Leadership in Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment', was hosted by Rwanda's Forum of Women Parliamentarians and was hosted at BY Parliament. The overarching theme of the conference focused on women's roles as leaders in promoting, accelerating, and sustaining gender equality and women's empowerment through sharing experiences and best practices. During it I attended plenary sessions focusing on women's leadership in governance and peace, economic empowerment, the environment, health, and education. The conference also included site visits to Kigali's FAWE Girls' Center of Excellence, and an invitation to the official inauguration

of the One Stop Center (for victim's of gender-based violence) and Kacyiru Police Hospital.

With conducting primary research, there were several limitations, which at this point are important to address. All primary research was conducted in Kigali, Rwanda. Kigali is the capital of Rwanda and an urban area. As will be seen in Chapter two and three of this thesis, there is a large disparity between urban and rural areas in Rwanda, especially in terms of development, poverty, economic activity, infrastructure, and access to resources. Thus, it must be noted that all interviewees currently work in Kigali, and therefore are by no means representative of Rwanda's entire population. Furthermore, not *all* Rwandan women MPs were interviewed, nor were *all* representatives of *all* women's-based organizations. So it is important to note the data received from interviews does not represent *all* MPs or women's-based organizations. It is also important to note that over half of participants in the study including most MPs, opted for full confidentiality. This means that in Chapter three and four, you will not see a large number of quotes or references directly from interviews. Instead, information that was provided in these interviews was researched and validated by another source.

To supplement the interviews and conference data, and to respect confidentiality requested by those interviewed, a significant amount of primary and secondary research was also used for the purposes of this study. News articles, statistics from the Rwandan government, World Bank and UNDP, and copies of laws and policies collected from the Rwandan Parliamentary Library were useful primary data sources. Meanwhile, research papers published about Rwanda's gender quota,

Parliamentary system, and women's movement were used throughout chapters two through five as secondary resources.

Another limitation to the research that is important to note was the lack of availability of statistics. In particular, statistics that reflect the economic activities of rural Rwandan women were extremely hard to come by. The majority of Rwanda's population lives in rural areas and many statistics in development reports done by the World Bank, UNDP, Rwandan Gender Monitoring Office, and Rwandan government itself did not have statistical representation for a number of development areas. This somewhat limited the ability to assess the effectiveness of women-focused policies and laws Rwanda's parliament has put out since 2003.

One final limitation that should be noted is that parliamentary gender quotas are a fairly new phenomenon. The implementation of Rwanda's gender quota is less than a decade old, which means the results of newer policies and laws are still to an extent, to be determined.

## CHAPTER 2

### **Rwanda: A Historical, Political, and Gender Background**

#### **1. Historical Overview**

Rwanda is a tiny landlocked country on the eastern side of Africa, boasting a dense population of 11,055,976 people.<sup>133</sup> Since its Independence in 1962, Rwanda's political regimes endorsed ethnic and regional discrimination that had been previously established by German and Belgium colonialists. By 1994, Rwanda experienced a genocide, during which time an estimated one million Rwandese citizens were killed in one hundred days. Due to the extreme nature of the massacres and violence, Rwanda has become inseparable from the genocide in media, literature, policy and minds around the globe. As will be outlined in this thesis, Rwanda can currently be recognized as a country that has moved beyond genocide and now boasts the largest number of women Parliamentarians in the world. In order to properly understand the effects of the gender quota on Rwanda's politics and equality, the history of Rwanda's genocide, political system, and women's movement must first be reviewed.

Before Germany began colonization in the late 1800s, Rwanda was an established, independent, hierarchical, state in which different groups of people shared common languages, land and religion.<sup>134</sup> In terms of politics, an "agreed sharing of rights" was prominent throughout Rwanda between the three ethnic

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<sup>133</sup> Twagilimana, Aimable. "Historical Dictionary of Rwanda". Maryland: The Scarecrow Press, Inc. 2007. Print.

<sup>134</sup> Newbury, David. "Understanding Genocide." *African Studies Review*. 41.1 (1998): 73-97. Web 2012.



groups Hutu, Tutsi, and Twa, which created mutually acceptable relationships.<sup>135</sup> However, by the time colonialism ended in 1962, Rwanda was economically poor, politically turbulent and socially and culturally divided. By the early 1970s, extreme ethnic divisions had allocated almost all of Rwanda's political and economic resources to a small Hutu elite.<sup>136</sup> In July 1973, Juvenal Habyarimana overthrew the Hutu government in a military coup, and upon becoming president, passed a new Constitution allowing only one political party in Rwanda; the National Revolutionary Movement for Development.<sup>137</sup> Throughout the 1970s and 80s, Rwanda was viewed by international donors as a model of development in Africa. The World Bank's development indicators ranked Rwanda highly, because of its growing GNP and food availability.<sup>138</sup> Although Habyarimana's political party no longer distinguished Hutu or Tutsi domination, over seventy years of ethnic separation, competition and hatred had been entrenched in Rwandan society.

By 1986, a Tutsi rebel group had formed called the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF), and consisted of predominantly exiled Tutsis living in Uganda. Three years later, due to world economic problems and a drop in coffee prices, Rwanda experienced increasing amounts of poverty, discontent and tension. Within a year, the RPF invaded Rwanda for the first time, aiming to create a power-sharing situation with Habyarimana. However, upon invasion, the RPF was opposed by the awaiting Rwandan Armed Forces (FAR). A cease-fire was quickly declared, but FAR

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<sup>135</sup> Jefremovas, Villia. "Contested Identities: Power and the Fictions of Ethnicity, Ethnography and History in Rwanda." *Anthropologica*. Waterloo: Wilfred Laurier University Press, 1997. Print.

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>137</sup> Twagilimana, Aimable, 2007. *Op.cit.*

<sup>138</sup> Uvin, Peter. "Aiding Violence: The Development Enterprise in Rwanda". Connecticut: Kumarian Press, Inc. 1998. Print.

immediately began increasing in size and capacity after realizing amplified, motivated support was becoming necessary. Despite a request for shared and equal power from the RPF, Tutsis were still locally persecuted and even murdered during the next two years.<sup>139</sup> By 1990, Rwanda was in turmoil, which eventually progressed into genocide in 1994.

Post-genocide Rwanda was left with many challenges including an extreme increase in the number of internally displaced citizens, widows and orphans, outbreak of diseases, and lack of shelter and resources.<sup>140</sup> In July 1994, the RPF and other political parties established the Government of National Unity to guarantee a transitional political period that could work towards an eventual new regime elected by Rwandans. The main goal of the new transitional government was to reduce and eventually eliminate discrimination and exclusion throughout Rwanda while also reconstructing the country's political system and establishing resources to rebuild.<sup>141</sup> In 2000, Rwanda adopted a republic, presidential, multiparty system that was supposed to represent democratic values and processes. By March 6, 2001, elections were organized by the transitional government to appoint grassroots level authorities in each district of the country. During this time 2,764 local council representatives, 106 town and district mayors, and 424 new town and district executives were all elected.<sup>142</sup> On May 26, 2003, Rwandans approved a new

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<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>140</sup> Rwanda. Minister in the Prime Minister's Office in Charge of Family and Gender Promotion. *Single Report Equal to Fourth, Fifth and Sixth Reports on the Implementation of The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women 1994-2005*. July 2007. Print.

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>142</sup> Warfield, Wallace and Ashad Sentongo. "Political Leadership and Conflict Resolution: An African Example." *African Journal on Conflict Resolution*. 11.2 (2011): 84-104. Web 2012.

constitution through a referendum, and elected a president on August 25, 2003 through a multiparty direct universal suffrage election. From the end of September to the beginning of October 2003, legislative elections occurred, resulting in Paul Kagame acting as president and the RPF as the party in power.<sup>143</sup>

## **2. Politics in Rwanda**

Since 2001, Rwanda's Parliament has been represented by Senate (upper chamber), and a lower chamber, the Chamber of Deputies. Senate is composed of 26 members; 12 members are elected by provincial and sectoral councils representing each province, 8 are appointed by the president, 4 are appointed by the Political Organizations Forum, and 2 represent universities and institutions of higher learning. Of these elected and appointed positions, women must hold at least 30 percent of the Senate in order to meet the gender quota outlined in Rwanda's Constitution. Every member serves an eight-year term on Senate.<sup>144</sup> Meanwhile, the Chamber of Deputies is composed of 80 members whom are all elected. Fifty-three members are elected by popular vote using a party-list proportional representation system, wherein each party presents a list of candidates for an electoral district, the voters vote for a party, and parties receive seats in proportion to their overall share of the vote. Twenty-four seats are reserved for women, who run in women-only elections (wherein only women can run and only women can vote). These women-

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<sup>143</sup> Rwanda. Minister in the Prime Minister's Office in Charge of Family and Gender Promotion, 2007. *Op.cit.*

<sup>144</sup> "Rwanda's Women Leading the Way". *Global Status of Women*. 9.1 (May 2009) World Savvy. Web 2012.

only elections are coordinated by grassroots women's councils that exist throughout each district of Rwanda.<sup>145</sup> The National Youth Council elects two more members of Senate, and one more is elected by the Federation of Associations of the Disabled.

In 2003, Rwandans approved a new and updated Constitution put forth by Kagame and the RPF. Maintaining a focus on decentralization, reconciliatory justice and combating the ideology of genocide by making illegal ethnic-based divisions and promoting national unity, the values underlying Rwanda's new Constitution are clear.<sup>146</sup> However, a unique aspect of the Constitution is the large number of gender equity policies that were to be applied within each level of government to enhance equality throughout the country. In many Constitutions, 'gender' and 'equality' represent little more than buzz words but in Rwanda, a gender quota is entrenched in the Constitution and requires one third of Parliament and all other decision-making bodies throughout the country, as well as *half* of the Supreme Court's judges to be represented by women.<sup>147</sup> Since the adoption of the Constitution in 2003, the Rwandan government has followed through with its commitment to the gender quota in all decision-making bodies.

### **3. Women Pre-Genocide**

In pre-colonial Rwanda, the Royal Family set the tone for the gender roles that would last throughout the country until the end of the 1990s. Men dominated

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<sup>145</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>146</sup> Warfield, Wallace and Ashad Sentongo, 2011. *Op.cit.*

<sup>147</sup> Burnet, Jennie E. "Gender Balance and the Meanings of Women in Governance in Post-Genocide Rwanda." *African Affairs*. 107.428. (May 2008). Web 2012.

the large majority of formally recognized leadership and decision-making roles within the Kingdom. However, women were known to co-rule with the men in power, they were just not formally recognized. For example, the Queen Mother was known to informally co-rule with her son, the King. She would influence his decision-making process, but Rwandans saw only him as the sole decision-maker and ruler.<sup>148</sup>

Within the household, it was common for men to refer to their wives as 'mabuja', meaning 'female boss' in Kinyrwanda. This was a term of endearment and represented the husbands' need to consult his wife before making a decision. However, despite this term, many scholars recognize that men still maintained the final decision regarding almost all matters family-related.<sup>149</sup> Elizabeth Pearson and Peace Uwineza recognize, "Rwandan women navigated a cultural space that had the potential to both enhance and suppress their power within the household and family."<sup>150</sup> This was clear through the household division of labour, which allowed women significant autonomy in their role as child bearer and food producer, but left men as the sole authority over other family matters, including land ownership.

Due to the entrenched tradition of formal decision-making positions belonging to solely men, pre-genocide Rwandan women lived and functioned in a patriarchal society in which their predominant role was that of child-bearer. Throughout the 1980s and 90s, an estimated one in five Rwandan women

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<sup>148</sup> Uwineza, Peace, Elizabeth Pearson and Elizabeth Powley. *Sustaining Women's Gains in Rwanda: The Influence of Indigenous Culture and Post-Genocide Politics*. Washington: Hunt Alternatives Fund, 2009. Print.

<sup>149</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>150</sup> *Ibid.*

experienced some form of domestic violence throughout their lifetime and males were a priority in terms of education. In secondary schools boys outnumbered girls nine to one and in universities men outnumbered women fifteen to one. Within politics, female representation in Parliament never exceeded seventeen percent of participating members. By 1993, sixty-three percent of deaths among women were due to reproductive health problems. In many ways, poverty and a lack of medical advancements were to blame, but so too was the lack of female input and participation within policy-making, especially regarding family planning and maternal healthcare.<sup>151</sup> Restrictive laws were in place that maintained patriarchy by disallowing female ownership of land and the right to apply for or receive loans. Although women made up over half of the “economically active” population, they received little recognition or benefits for their labour and were forced to depend on their male counterparts for access to loans and land. A Commercial Code legally enforced in Rwanda went as far as restricting women’s involvement in the workforce until permission to work was granted by a family male figure.<sup>152</sup>

At this point, it is important to recognize that both ethnicity and economic status played a large role in the way women were perceived within society and the household. Elizabeth Pearson and Peace Uwineza importantly recognize, “ethnicity and economic status are important forms of social difference and highlight ways in which cultural gender practices did not affect all women identically.”<sup>153</sup> For example,

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<sup>151</sup> Nowrojee, Binaifer. “Shattered Lives: Sexual Violence During the Rwandan Genocide and Its Aftermath.” *UN Human Rights Watch Africa*. (Sept. 1996) Web 2012.

<sup>152</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>153</sup> Uwineza, Peace, Elizabeth Pearson and Elizabeth Powley, 2009. *Op.cit.*

in wealthier homes, men had less time to control matters of the family due to busy work schedules, which left women with higher roles of authority in the home. Meanwhile, in poorer homes women often experienced less control, as their husbands who worked from the homestead, could watch over the family and control much more.<sup>154</sup> Regardless, the general perception of women and girls throughout Rwandan society was one of powerlessness and subordination.

Despite obvious and seemingly extreme gender inequalities, there remained a fairly strong, though perhaps restricted women's movement within Rwanda. The very first Ministry for Women was established in Rwanda 1965, when the first female Parliamentarian also began to serve.<sup>155</sup> However, Marissa B. Goldfaden recognizes neither the Ministry nor the start of the Decade of Women in 1975 seemed to have a significant impact in changing the cultural, legal, social and educational marginalization Rwandan women were clearly experiencing.<sup>156</sup> Despite their low formal representation, (which is the same as the United States and is the current global average) and obvious oppression within society, women's grassroots organizations began to grow throughout the 1980s. Pro-Femmes (Rwanda's largest women's based NGO umbrella organization to date) was established in the mid-1980s and women throughout the country began to mobilize. It was through these grassroots organizations and personal networks that women who traditionally did not even speak publicly in front of men, began to informally pressure and sway their

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<sup>154</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>155</sup> Powley, Elizabeth. "Rwanda: The Impact of Women Legislators on Policy Outcomes Affecting Children and Families." *The State of the World's Children 2007*. (Dec. 2006): 1-18. Web 2012.

<sup>156</sup> Goldfaden, Marissa B. "Triumph Over Tragedy: The Women's Movement of Rwanda Finds Success Post-Genocide". *Student Pulse Academic Journal*. 2.01. (Jan. 2010): 1-2. Web 2012.

husbands' mindsets, and influence court decisions by proxy.<sup>157</sup> This movement was based on a common overall goal of narrowing the gaps between women and men in terms of how both genders accessed all sectors of society, so that equality could eventually be achieved.<sup>158</sup>

However, by the spring of 1994, ethnic tensions within Rwanda had reached an all-time high and any progress being made within the country came to a halt with the onset of a three month long civil war that would later be recognized as genocide.

#### **4. Women During Genocide**

Technically speaking, the genocide did not start until April 1994, but the build-up to violence began during colonialism when the Hutu and Tutsi were formally separated according to horrifically racist European classifications. Post-colonial Rwanda saw persistent ethnic tensions well into the 1980s, when Tutsis began to experience an increase in threats to their everyday individual securities. Women, understood as the "permeable boundary" between the Hutu and Tutsi because of their reproductive status within society, began to experience the brunt of increased hostility and violence. During this period, children resulting from inter-ethnic marriages were considered "impure", and as a result Tutsi females acquired the lowest status of all Rwandans in society.<sup>159</sup>

In the months leading up to the genocide, Hutu extremist literature did not

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<sup>157</sup> Uwineza, Peace, Elizabeth Pearson and Elizabeth Powley, 2007. *Op.cit.*

<sup>158</sup> Goldfaden, Marissa B, 2010. *Op.cit.*

<sup>159</sup> Taylor, Christopher C. "A Gendered Genocide: Tutsi Women and Hutu Extremists in the 1994 Rwanda Genocide." *PoLaR: Political and Legal Anthropology Review* 22.1. (May 1999): 42-54. University of Alabama. Web 2012.



just target Tutsis; it targeted Tutsi women. Extremist propaganda presented Tutsi women as immoral prostitutes and even published cartoons of Tutsi females performing sexual acts on Belgian paratroopers. Eventually, the cartoons were published in Western media, presenting an appalling and faulty image of Rwandan women.<sup>160</sup> An excerpt from Hutu propaganda literature stated, “These women [Tutsi women] are very sexual, and they sleep with their Tutsi brothers. You will be deceived by them”.<sup>161</sup> In many areas of Africa, sex and sexuality is a cultural taboo, and in the case of Rwanda, it was used as propaganda to disadvantage and lower the status of Tutsi women. Discussing sex and sexuality openly within Rwanda was for the most part, discouraged and culturally unacceptable. Due to the use of rape and sexual violence during the genocide, the process of healing and rebuilding for women was much more difficult.

When the genocide began, Christopher Taylor believes women were important as both agents and symbols of wartime. As agents of the genocide, women of both ethnicities played significant roles. As symbols, women were killed in numbers equal to men, proving that despite a patriarchal society, women were not perceived as innocent non-combatants.<sup>162</sup> Women of child-bearing age often found themselves targets of violence because they were viewed as possible reproducers of the Tutsi ethnicity.<sup>163</sup> The various acts of sexual violence that were experienced by women during the genocide were carried out with the intent of eradicating all

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<sup>160</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>161</sup> Nowrojee, Binaifer. “Shattered Lives: Sexual Violence During the Rwandan Genocide and Its Aftermath.” *UN Human Rights Watch Africa*. (Sept. 1996) Web 2012.

<sup>162</sup> Taylor, Christopher C., 1999. *Op.cit.*

<sup>163</sup> Newbury, David. “Understanding Genocide.” *African Studies Review*. 41.1 (1998): 73-97. Web 2012.

Tutsis. The common belief held by most perpetrators was that the psychological, physical and emotional assaults on each Tutsi female would aid in advancing the complete destruction and elimination of the Tutsi ethnicity altogether.<sup>164</sup>

As the violence began to lessen in July 1994, Hutu extremist media remained dominant throughout society. The Radio Television Libre de Mille Collines made a public announcement as the violence was fading stating, "You Hutu girls wash yourselves and put on a good dress to welcome our French allies. The Tutsi girls are all dead, so now you have your chance".<sup>165</sup> Not only had Tutsi women been targeted by Hutu extremists, women were now being pinned against other women. A common idea began to emerge that the potential of Hutu women could only be reached in the absence of Tutsi women.

After one hundred days of violence and bloodshed ended, around one million people had been killed and hundreds of thousands more had fled to Rwanda's neighbor countries, Uganda and the DRC. Of Rwanda's surviving population, 70 percent were women, who for the first time ever were forced to become heads of households and primary providers for their families.<sup>166</sup> After experiencing such extreme devastation as the world stood by, Rwandans had no choice but to change and begin to rebuild. At the forefront of this change, forced to be strong, proactive, and united, were Rwanda's women.

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<sup>164</sup> Nowrojee, Binaifer, 1996. *Op.cit.*

<sup>165</sup> Taylor, Christopher C., 1999. *Op.cit.*

<sup>166</sup> *Ibid.*

## 5. Women Post-Genocide

By the end of Rwanda's genocide, most women were left widowed or orphaned and because of pre-existing patriarchal values in Rwandan society, lacked proper education, marketable skills, and land ownership.<sup>167</sup> At the same time as Rwandan women were trying to rebuild their lives, an "informal demographic competition" was occurring, which aimed to replace those who were killed during the genocide, to provide a new generation of Rwandans, and to re-populate militants for possible future ethnic battles. As a result, women were expected to produce children as fast as possible.<sup>168</sup>

Additionally, the majority of women were dealing with the repercussions of rape and sexual violence they had experienced throughout the build-up to and duration of the genocide. Rakiya Omaar and Alex de Waal recognize "rape is an instrument of genocide. It destroys the fundamental fabric of interpersonal relations that constitutes a community. It shatters the sense of security and identity of the victim, and isolates her from her family and community".<sup>169</sup> Since sex and sexuality have always been cultural taboos in Rwandan society, "rape victims have generally found little sympathy and solidarity, and are increasingly concealing their experiences".<sup>170</sup> As a result, David Newbury argues, "rape was often a sentence of death; the expression of 'survivors of rape' has an especially dramatic and poignant

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<sup>167</sup> Nowrojee, Binaifer, 1996. *Op.cit.*

<sup>168</sup> Newbury, David, 1998. *Op.cit.*

<sup>169</sup> Omaar, Rakiya and Alex de Waal. *Rwanda: Death, Despair and Defiance*. London: African Rights, Aug. 1995. Print.

<sup>170</sup> *Ibid.*

meaning in Rwanda”.<sup>171</sup> Not only did sexual violence have long-lasting psychological effects for many women in Rwanda, its legacy also took on several physical forms. First of all, many young girls and women became pregnant during the genocide and gave birth to children of their rapist. Rwanda is a predominantly Roman Catholic country so even where abortions were available, many women refused to have them. This legacy has had huge consequences for Rwandan society since “health workers have noticed that mothers do not take care of their children born through rape; they do not show them affection or look after them properly”.<sup>172</sup> Furthermore, sexual violence and acts of rape during the genocide also resulted in the spread of AIDS and other gynecological health problems. As a result, personal and health-related security were desperately needed throughout all of post-genocide Rwanda. However, during the genocide most doctors and nurses had been killed and medical equipment in hospitals had been stolen or deliberately destroyed.<sup>173</sup>

Despite the obvious physical and emotional traumas the majority of Rwandan women had experienced, they quickly and peacefully began to unite in an attempt to start to rebuild their communities. Catharine Newbury and Hannah Baldwin emphasize that it was in this context of crisis, when the state could not meet the needs of Rwandans, that women started to find ways to cooperate despite their different experiences in the genocide, to start to resolve problems and rebuild.<sup>174</sup> In rural areas, women started to form together to build on rural women’s-based

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<sup>171</sup> Newbury, David, 1998. *Op.cit.*

<sup>172</sup> Omaar, Rakiya and Alex de Waal, 1995. *Op.cit.*

<sup>173</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>174</sup> Newbury, Catharine and Hannah Baldwin. “Aftermath: Women’s Organizations in Post-Conflict Rwanda”. *Center for Development Information and Evaluation*. Washington: USAID, July 2000. Web 2012.

organizations that had existed prior to the genocide to start providing both social and economic support for one another and families that had been torn apart in their communities.<sup>175</sup> Members of these organizations took censuses of previous members and the process of locating survivors began. A pre-existing women's-based micro-lending cooperative called *Duterimbere* had remained completely intact during the genocide (while most commercial banks had been looted), so many women were able to access their small, individual bank accounts and restart small businesses and cooperatives.<sup>176</sup> Due to the crisis of the genocide, the historical strength of women's organizations, and support from international donors, from 1994 and 2003, Rwandan women's organizations became the most active sectors of civil society.<sup>177</sup> Throughout these post-genocide years, the goals of the women's movement in Rwanda made a shift from a desire for greater equality through an increased female voice and presence, to legally codifying the achievements women had made and formally recognizing their seemingly necessary role as leaders throughout the country.<sup>178</sup> During the years following the genocide, many scholars including Jennie Burnet describe the development and success of women's organizations in Rwanda as "nothing short of remarkable".<sup>179</sup>

On July 19, 1994, the RPF became Rwanda's transitional government, re-naming itself the 'Government of National Unity'. Almost immediately the new

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<sup>175</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>176</sup> Burnet, Jennie E. "Gender Balance and the Meanings of Women in Governance in Post-Genocide Rwanda." *African Affairs*. 107.428. (May 2008): 361-386. Web 2012.

<sup>177</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>178</sup> Goldfaden, Marissa B. "Triumph Over Tragedy: The Women's Movement of Rwanda Finds Success Post-Genocide". *Student Pulse Academic Journal*. 2.01. (Jan. 2010): 1-2. Web 2012.

<sup>179</sup> Burnet, Jennie E., 2008. *Op.cit.*

government began a program called National Unity and Reconciliation, in which it became illegal for Rwandans to identify as either Hutu or Tutsi. The first transitional national Parliament was also quickly established and included the participation of ten women members.<sup>180</sup> In 1995, Rwandan women Parliamentarians participated in the UN's Fourth International Women's Conference in Beijing, during which time several significant resolutions regarding women's empowerment were established. One of the twelve critical areas that were established was to "achieve gender balance in government bodies and women's equal participation in power structures." It is clear from the reforms that took place in Rwanda over the next five years, that the Beijing Conference's resolutions were taken seriously by Rwandan MPs and truly had an effect on the country's leading policies.<sup>181</sup>

In 1995, the Ministry of Gender and Family Promotion (MIGEPROF) was established and became the driving force behind women's empowerment and gender-sensitivity within Rwanda's government. Once the Ministry had mobilized resources and dealt with the immediate aftermath of the genocide, it began compiling long-term strategies to empower women and formally include them in all areas of decision-making.<sup>182</sup>

By 1996, *Pro-Femmes*, Rwanda's largest female-led umbrella organization, boasted a membership of thirty-five organizations, and was led by a diverse group of both Hutu and Tutsi women. These leaders made a conscious effort to set their

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<sup>180</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>181</sup> "Women Taking A Lead. Progress Toward Empowerment and Gender Equity in Rwanda". *Women for Women International*. (Sept. 2004): 1-42. Web 2012.

<sup>182</sup> *Ibid.*

differences aside and focus on issues that affected *all* Rwandan women. By the end of 1996, *Pro-Femmes* had launched a Peace Action Campaign to promote a culture of peace and stability throughout the country.<sup>183</sup> In the same year, the Rwanda Women Parliamentary Forum (FFRP) became one of the first parliamentary networks to be established in the National Transitional Assembly. Twelve women Parliamentarians, who all came from different political parties and backgrounds formed the FFRP with a common goal of promoting gender equality and women's empowerment within Parliament and society as a whole.<sup>184</sup>

In 1997, UNICEF released a report that strongly critiqued the lack of women involved in local, grassroots government structures throughout Rwanda. Within a year, MIGEPROF began organizing elections to establish women's councils in an effort to increase women leaders at the grassroots level. Each council was composed of ten elected women at the cellule level, who then elected ten more women to represent them at the sector and district levels. Each level would report to the next, with the district level council reporting to the provincial Member of Parliament. The purpose of these councils was for women to have an opportunity to voice their opinions regarding local issues, promote women's interests, and to encourage other women to become politically involved.<sup>185</sup> Throughout the next several years, Rwandan women's organizations continued to grow and women became increasingly involved politically.

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<sup>183</sup> Burnet, Jennie E., 2008. *Op.cit.*

<sup>184</sup> Rwanda. Forum of Rwandan Women Parliamentarians. "Gender Equality in the Rwanda Parliament". July 2008. P 2. Web 2012.

<sup>185</sup> Newbury, Catharine and Hannah Baldwin, 2000. *Op.cit.*

In 2003, the Legislative Transition Assembly dissolved after the first post-genocide parliamentary elections and a bi-cameral Parliament was instituted under elected president, Paul Kagame. Before the elections, the number of women Members of Parliament had increased to twenty-three percent. Rwanda's new Constitution, also established in 2003, introduced a 30 percent gender quota in all political areas of decision-making, including both chambers of parliament (Senate and the Chamber of Deputies).<sup>186</sup>

The Upper House of Rwanda's new legislature (Senate) has 26 members who are either elected or appointed to eight-year terms. Some members are elected by provincial and sectoral councils, while others are appointed by the president. Regardless, Rwanda's new Constitution guaranteed that at least 30 percent of the Senate would be represented by women. Meanwhile, the Lower House of Rwanda's legislature (the Chamber of Deputies) is composed of 80 members, 53 of whom are elected to represent political parties in a proportional representation system. The rest of the seats are elected by specified groups within Rwandan society. Twenty-four seats are elected by women from each province, two are elected by the National Youth Council, and one is elected by the Federation of the Associations of the Disabled.<sup>187</sup>

The 2003 elections respected the terms of the new Constitution and 30 percent of Rwanda's new Senate became represented by women. However, the Chamber of Deputies saw a different outcome. By the end of the elections, the 24

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<sup>186</sup> Powley, Elizabeth. "Rwanda: The Impact of Women Legislators on Policy Outcomes Affecting Children and Families." *The State of the World's Children 2007*. (Dec. 2006): 1-18. Web 2012.

<sup>187</sup> Powley, Elizabeth, 2006. *Op.cit.*



quota-seats were filled by women, and additionally, Rwandans had elected 15 women to openly-competed seats, which meant that 48 percent of the Chamber of Deputies was represented by women.<sup>188</sup>

By 2006, women made up a majority of the country's working population, acted as heads of 35 percent of households and also produced the majority of Rwanda's agricultural output. Elizabeth Powley argues, "They [women] are the majority constituency and the most productive segment of the Rwandan population."<sup>189</sup> As of May 2010, the quota of having at least 30 percent of all decision-making organs, top officials and civil servants represented by women as outlined in the Constitution of 2003, was still respected by parliament (Senate and Chamber of Deputies), government (Ministers and Ministers of State), permanent secretaries, the Supreme Court, the High Court of the Republic, the Gacaca court, and the Governor of the Provinces and Kigali City.<sup>190</sup> Paul Kagame has also adopted women to nine of the 28 ministerial posts including Ministry of Gender, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Rural and Social Affairs and Ministry of the Presidency.<sup>191</sup> In total, women represent 56 percent of Parliament, 52 percent of the Judiciary, over 30 percent of Cabinet (who lead some of the most important posts including Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Industry, Agriculture, and Gender and

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<sup>188</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>189</sup> Powley, Elizabeth, 2006. *Op.cit.*

<sup>190</sup> Rwanda. Ministry of Gender and Family Promotion. *National Action Plan 2009-2012*. May, 2010. Web 2012.

<sup>191</sup> Goldfaden, Marissa B., 2010. *Op.cit.*

Family Promotion), 54 percent of local governments, and the Speaker of the Chamber of Deputies as well as the president of the Supreme Court.<sup>192</sup>

According to Marissa Goldfaden, women in government are currently perceived as more approachable and trustworthy politicians than their male counterparts. Women are also traditionally recognized as having a larger capacity for promoting forgiveness and reconciliation during post-conflict peace-building processes.<sup>193</sup> However, the question still remains: is the increased number of women parliamentarians in Rwanda truly empowered? Are they having an effect on gender equality by increasing the number and effectiveness of women-focused laws and policies put forth by Parliament?

The following chapters of this thesis will explore the role Rwanda's increased number of women Parliamentarians have played in pushing, developing, and implementing women-focused laws and policies before and after the enactment of the quota. From there we will examine why these women MPs have been able to reach their legal and policy achievements and will ultimately discover the role the Parliamentary gender quota has played. The thesis will end with a look into the challenges Rwandan women and the RPF continue to face, as well as an analysis of the lessons Rwanda's gender-equal Parliament can contribute to the creation and enactment of gender quotas worldwide, and gender equality and development as a whole.

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<sup>192</sup> "International Forum on the Role of Leadership in Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment" Conference. Aide Memoire. Kigali, Rwanda. May 2010.

<sup>193</sup> Goldfaden, Marissa B., 2010. *Op.cit.*

## **CHAPTER 3:**

### **Rwandan Women Parliamentarians Case Study: Women-Focused Legislation and Policies since the Quota**

#### **Introduction**

Ambassador Liberata Mulamula (Senior Advisor of the President of the Republic of Tanzania who participated in Rwandan peace talks in Arusha, Tanzania between 1992 and 1994) argues the biggest current challenge regarding parliamentary gender quotas is implementation. Mulamula argues when it comes to gender quotas, especially in Rwanda, there *is* enough representation of women. The legal instruments and commitment at the highest level (30 percent gender quota entrenched in the Constitution) all exist, but the remaining challenge is ensuring women-focused laws and policies are put forth that represent women's interests and encourage equality.<sup>194</sup>

This chapter will begin with a top-down analysis of the role of Rwandan women parliamentarians and how effective they have been in creating women-focused laws and policies as well as in ensuring their implementation. Next, I will examine statistics and developmental factors that are in line with the women-focused laws and policies that have emerged since 2003 to determine the success of these laws and policies. For example, the number of reported incidents of gender-based violence will be considered since the enactment of Rwanda's law on Gender-Based Violence. This will be followed by an analysis of the causal factors behind the

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<sup>194</sup> Ambassador Liberata Mulamula. (17 May 2010) [Field notes collected during "International Forum on the Role of Leadership in Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment" conference in Kigali, Rwanda] Unpublished raw data.

progress Rwandan women MPs have made and an examination of the role of the quota in empowering these women to push women-focused policies in government and in practice.

Overall, we will find the parliamentary gender quota and increase of women's formal political representation in post-genocide Rwanda has indeed contributed to an increase in women-focused laws, policies, and programs, which according to statistics and analyses, have begun to enhance gender equality within Rwanda. However, what we will also find is that this situation is due to Rwanda's unique history and not just its parliamentary gender quota. Upon understanding Rwanda's history, we will see that a strong pre-genocide women's movement, effects of genocide, willingness of government, and Proportional Representation electoral system are all contributing factors to Rwanda's increase in women MPs and women-focused legislation.

### **1. Gender-focused Laws Pre- and Post-Gender Quota**

The role of Parliamentarians as outlined by the Rwandan government's official website is to pass legislation, represent the Rwandan population, and scrutinize and oversee executive action.<sup>195</sup> Thus, we will begin by looking at the women-focused legislation that Rwanda's parliament has put forth pre- and post-gender quota that carries the possibility of enhancing women's rights throughout the country if implemented correctly. Comparing the numbers of women-focused legislation passed pre and post-quota will provide an idea of whether or not the

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<sup>195</sup> Rwanda. *Government of the Republic of Rwanda*. 2012. Web. 15 Dec. 2012.

increase in women MPs has also increased their ability to push women's perspectives and issues in parliament.

Before the implementation of the gender quota in 2003, the transitional 'Government of National Unity's' parliament included 10 women members. From 1995 to 2003, the government put forth several laws, policies, and amendments to laws that empowered women and promoted gender equality.

After the establishment of both the Ministry of Gender and Family Promotion (MIGEPROF) and the Forum of Women Parliamentarians (FFRP), the first major legal change to come about under the transitional government regarding women was in 1999 called the Law on Matrimonial Regimes, Liberalities, and Successions, also known as the Law on Inheritance. This new law established women's right to land ownership and inheritance, a right women previously did not enjoy. In addition to establishing women's right to own and inherit land, the law also gave women full legal rights to enter into contracts, seek paid employment, and open bank accounts without the authorization of a male figure, something that had previously been unheard of in Rwanda. Jennie Burnet recognizes the bill was significant not only because of the rights it established for women, but because it truly demonstrated how women in government and women in civil society were beginning to work together to enhance women's empowerment throughout the country. Women's grassroots organizations, MIGEPROF, and the Forum of Women Parliamentarians had worked together to formulate the policy and lobby leaders in other ministries

and in the inner circle of the transitional government to establish the new law.<sup>196</sup> The women's movement was united through the few existing women MPs and strong non-government women's organizations, which made petitioning representatives of different political parties with a unified message to change the law on land inheritance easier.

In 2001, Law N° 27/2001 establishing the rights and protection of the child against violence was updated to legally recognize a woman's right to grant her nationality to her child, even if the child's father was not Rwandese. Prior to the amendment to the law, all Rwandan children legally bore the nationality of their father, regardless of his nationality.<sup>197</sup> The law also criminalized murder, rape, exploitation, neglect and abandonment of children, and protected girls from forced or premature (before age of 21) marriage.

In 2002, the transitional government updated its law that in 2000 had established the organization of elections of leaders at the grassroots level of Rwandan society. The law was updated to include a gender quota that required 30 percent of all representatives at the grassroots levels of leadership to be women.<sup>198</sup> However, after grassroots level elections, women represented 26 percent of District Councils and 24 percent of District Executive Committees, falling just below the requirement of the law's quota. Regardless, this law likely helped pave the way for

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<sup>196</sup> Burnet, Jennie E. "Gender Balance and the Meanings of Women in Governance in Post-Genocide Rwanda." *African Affairs*. 107. (28 May 2008) 361-386. Web 15 Dec. 2012.

<sup>197</sup> Rwanda. Minister in the Prime Minister's Office in charge of Family and Gender Promotion. *Single Report Equal to Fourth, Fifth and Sixth Reports on the Implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women*. Kigali, July 2007. Print.

<sup>198</sup> Rwanda. Minister in the Prime Minister's Office in charge of Family and Gender Promotion, 2007. *Op.cit.*

the gender quota outlined in Rwanda's 2003 Constitution, and displayed how women were becoming increasingly engaged politically.

By 2003 and the end of the transitional government's run, women represented 23 percent of Parliament, a significant increase from 10 percent in 1995. By the end of the 2003 elections, Rwandans had voted women to represent 30 percent of the Senate (Upper House in Parliament) and 48 percent of the Chamber of Deputies (Lower House in Parliament). The fact that the number of women elected to the Chamber of Deputies went beyond the requirements of the quota reflects the progress women had made as political leaders prior to 2003.

Once elections were complete and the RPF officially took power, parliamentarians began updating existing laws and presenting new legislation with a clear focus on including women and equality every step of the way.

Rwanda's 2003 Constitution introduced Law N° 27, which established the National Women's Council. The Council was intended as an institutionalized social forum for women to voice opinions and perspectives in order to participate in the development of Rwanda. To this day, the Council consists of a General Assembly, Executive Committee, and Permanent Secretariat, has a legal personality and is administratively and financially autonomous.<sup>199</sup> The main goals of the council are to compile the views of Rwandan women in various parts of the country, to train women to work together to problem solve and participate in the development of their communities, to enhance women's ability to carry out their own economic

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<sup>199</sup> Abbott, Pamela and John Rwihahira. "Millennium Development Goals Rwanda Country Report 2010." United Nations Development Programme, Kigali. (2010) Print.

activities, and to represent women in the governance of Rwanda and enable women to participate in government programs.<sup>200</sup>

In November 2003, Law N° 30, the law regarding identity cards (establishing place of residency, etc.) was updated so that a woman could register her child on her identity card. Previously, all Rwandan children could be registered only on their father's identity card.<sup>201</sup>

In 2004, the RPF passed a law that codified punishment for those who were found guilty of perpetrating rape and/or sexual torture during the genocide. Punishment for such crimes ranges from serving a minimum of 25 years in prison to a maximum sentence of the death penalty. Previously in Rwanda, rape was not considered a war crime and punishment was significantly less severe.<sup>202</sup>

In 2005, the government passed Law N° 08/2005 determining the Use and Management of Land in Rwanda. Although the Inheritance Law had passed in 1999, legally providing women with the right to inherit and own land, this law provided a married woman equal rights as her husband over land. Furthermore, the new law required the final transfer of rights from a sale or exchange of land from a family to be approved by the entire family (who are joint owners of such rights), whereas previously only a husband maintained land ownership and was involved in the process of its sale and exchange.<sup>203</sup>

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<sup>200</sup> Rwanda. Office of the Prime Minister. *The National Women's Council*. 2012. Web 15 Dec. 2012.

<sup>201</sup> Rwanda. Minister in the Prime Minister's Office in charge of Family and Gender Promotion, 2007. *Op.cit.*

<sup>202</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>203</sup> Rwanda Parliamentary Library. Organic Law No. 08/2005 of 14/07/2005 Determining the Use and Management of Land in Rwanda. May 2010. Print.



In 2008, Rwandan women MPs passed a huge milestone when legislation regarding the prevention and punishment of Gender-Based Violence (GBV) was passed into law. Women MPs had worked for years with representatives from grassroots women's organizations to conduct research in order to draft the law, and then to push it in Plenary Sessions to have it passed. The law defines GBV, identifies various types of GBV, provides a legal definition of the rape of an adult woman, and outlines punishments for GBV crimes.<sup>204</sup>

Finally, in 2009 the RPF updated Law N° 13/2009 Regulating Labour in Rwanda. The updates to the pre-existing law were significant, especially with regard to women in the workforce. In the 'Definitions' section of the law, GBV is defined as "any physical, psychological or sexual gestures that deprives an individual of their rights and negatively affects them in the workplace."<sup>205</sup> The sections following this definition protect workers against GBV and harassment, as well as discrimination in the workplace based on sex or marital status. Article 64 of the law establishes and outlines Maternity Leave duration, breastfeeding periods, remuneration during maternity leave, and a woman's right to resume work post-maternity leave.<sup>206</sup> The updates to this law made it easier for women to become active in the workforce and to understand their rights, and again, show the ever-growing influence women MPs were having in parliament.

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<sup>204</sup> Rwanda Parliamentary Library. Law N° 59/2008 of 10/09/2008 on Prevention and Punishment of Gender-Based Violence. May 2010. Print.

<sup>205</sup> Rwanda Parliamentary Library. Law N° 13/2009 of 27/05/2009 Law Regulating Labour in Rwanda. May 2010. Print.

<sup>206</sup> Rwanda Parliamentary Library. Law N° 13/2009 of 27/05/2009 Law Regulating Labour in Rwanda. May 2010. Print.

At this point it is clear that the increase in women MPs in Parliament in 2003 has contributed to the significant increase in women-focused legislation that has appeared in Rwanda from 2003 onward. Although we cannot assume all women MPs have pushed legislation that enhances the rights of women, we can see that since 2003 when women went from representing 23 percent of Parliament to almost half of it, there was a significant increase in the number of laws that were either introduced or updated that include recognition of several specific needs to women. There is no way to prove this increase in women-focused laws is a direct result of the increased number of women MPs. However, all women MPs interviewed for this study stated regardless of their committee posts, they continually include women's perspectives (which come from women in their representative districts and their own experiences) when discussing new programs and legislation. Furthermore, over half of Rwanda's current women in the Chamber of Deputies (Lower House) were either coordinators of the National Women's Council for their districts, staff of MIGEPROF, or coordinators of women's rights in development agencies such as Action Aid before becoming Parliamentarians. Meanwhile, Rwanda's current women Senators (Upper House in Parliament) include the former president of Rwanda's largest women's development network *Pro-Femmes*, the former Program Manager of *Pro-Femmes*, the former executive secretary of the Association for the Defense of Women's Rights, the former Chief of Staff of MIGEPROF, as well as the former presidents of several grassroots women's associations and cooperatives.<sup>207</sup> With the

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<sup>207</sup> Rwanda. Republic of Rwanda Parliament. *Senate and Chamber of Deputies Member Profiles*. 2012. Web. 15 Dec. 2012.

increased number of laws that directly include women and enhance their rights, it is clear these women in both the Senate and Chamber of Deputies have been influenced by their previous occupations.

It is now necessary to recognize just because rights become formalized in law, does not mean they will be effectively implemented or enforced, especially in a country that in many rural areas lacks key infrastructure and resources. While attending the FFRP's 'International Forum on the Role of Leadership in Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment,' Sheila Sisulu (Deputy Executive of the World Food Program) stated, "policies [in Rwanda] need to be translated into real, practical solutions that better affect the lives of girls and women."<sup>208</sup> Thus, before we conclude that an increase in women MPs has positively enhanced gender equality as a whole, we must consider the mechanisms that have been put in place by the Rwandan government to enforce and promote the women-focused laws that have been put forth.

## **2. Implementation Mechanisms and Results**

In this section I will examine the mechanisms the RPF has created and implemented in an effort to ensure its women-focused legislation is mainstreamed within society. After conducting various interviews in Kigali with Rwandan government officials and MPs, it became clear that the large majority of those interviewed recognize the next major steps after creating legislation and laws that enhance women's empowerment and gender equality is to ensure these laws and

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<sup>208</sup> Sisulu, Sheila. (17 May 2010) [Field notes collected during "International Forum on the Role of Leadership in Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment" conference in Kigali, Rwanda] Unpublished raw data.

policies are not only understood at the grassroots level, but that programs and resources are in place to ensure they are implemented effectively. Based on the laws and policies there were introduced or changed since 2003, it seems Parliament's main areas of concern for women and the development of gender equality are in education, health, Gender Based Violence, and economic empowerment. Thus, after reviewing some of the overarching mechanisms that have been established by the RPF to enforce women-focused laws and promote gender sensitization in the legislative process, I will review these areas of development and the improvements that have been seen of these women-focused laws.

### **Gender Monitoring Office (GMO)**

The first major mechanism for enhancing gender mainstreaming in policy and practice was established within the 2003 Constitution under Article 185 as the Gender Monitoring Office (GMO).<sup>209</sup> As outlined in the Constitution, the main role of the GMO is to develop clear performance indicators in line with priority areas to ensure effective progress towards gender equality throughout Rwanda. This includes establishing a monitoring and evaluation system with gender-specific indicators (both qualitative and quantitative). Under these guidelines, the GMO would also conduct a gender audit, carry out monitoring surveys, develop guidelines for periodic reporting, and set monitoring standards for gender equality based on sectors throughout the country.<sup>210</sup>

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<sup>209</sup> Rwanda. Ministry of Gender and Family Promotion. *National Evaluation Report on Implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995) and the Outcome of the Twenty-third Special Session of the General Assembly (2000)*. Sept. 2009. Web. 15 Dec. 2012.

<sup>210</sup> Rwanda. Gender Monitoring Office. Web. 15 Dec. 2012.

Although established under the 2003 Constitution, the GMO did not come to fruition until October 2008. It consists of three main bodies: High Monitoring Council members (chief gender monitor and chief deputies- one in charge of gender and one in charge of gender based violence), executive secretariat, and consultative committee (an advisory committee made up of various stakeholders whose role is to monitor gender considerations in public, private and civil society organizations). Specifically, the GMO monitors policies, laws, programs and projects put forth by the government to ensure they are 'gender sensitive' and also monitors the government's budget and recommends gender budgeting.<sup>211</sup>

The key indicator the GMO uses is how women and men are tracked and represented within any program or policy. For example, in a first analysis of agricultural sector development, the GMO looks at how agricultural practices can affect women and men differently. In a second analysis, the GMO takes these gendered effects and ensures that the government's policy or project proposal involves initiatives to reduce any uneven burdens of agricultural work experienced by men and women. This guarantees that in the planning process, government officials understand the gender issues and incorporate specific measures to plan and budget appropriately.<sup>212</sup>

Annually, the GMO produces a Gender Status Report, the first of which was finished by the end of 2010. The Report outlines the GMO's partners (the Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning and the National Institute of Statistics) in gaining

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<sup>211</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>212</sup> Stacey, Justine. Cyrille Turatsenze. Deputy Chief Gender Monitor. Interview. Kigali, Rwanda. May 2010.

access to areas of improvement for gender mainstreaming in Rwanda as well as how gender best practices have been and will be continued to be documented. It presents goals for gender mainstreaming in policy action and reviews in great detail progress that has been made with Rwanda's fairly new Gender Based Violence law.<sup>213</sup>

Cyrille Turatsenze, (Deputy Chief Gender Monitor) although pleased with the GMO's progress, recognizes there are still several challenges to overcome. The main challenge the GMO faces is getting accurate statistics on women and men throughout Rwanda to better enhance gender monitoring mechanisms. In 2010, the GMO was beginning to work closely with the National Institute of Statistics in Rwanda, so as to improve and increase gender monitoring throughout the entire country. Turatsenze also noted that the GMO needed to expand its capacity and that plans are in the works to involve an increased number of stakeholders in the gender sensitization and monitoring process.<sup>214</sup> To date, the GMO has compiled gender disaggregated data in partnership the National Institute of Statistics in Rwanda, done participatory gender analyses in agriculture, capacity building, and employment sectors, monitored the government's gender budgeting process, begun compiling gender best practices, and standardized gender audit and analysis tools.<sup>215</sup> Since the GMO was not officially launched until 2008, by the end of 2010 as we can see, it was still very much at the level of compiling research and harmonizing gender mainstreaming best practices.

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<sup>213</sup> The GMO's 2010 Report will be referenced in the next section of this chapter to assess development indicators and the improvements and/or lack thereof Rwandan women have experienced since 2003.

<sup>214</sup> Stacey, Justine. Cyrille Turatsenze. Deputy Chief Gender Monitor. Interview. Kigali, Rwanda. May 2010.

<sup>215</sup> Rwanda. Gender Monitoring Office. *Annual Report January 2009- June 2010*. Web. 15 Dec. 2012.

## **National Gender Policy**

In 2004 the RPF adapted a National Gender Policy that was to be implemented in all developmental sectors throughout the country (from central to decentralized levels). The policy highlights guidelines on which policies and programs will be based in order to better integrate gender issues. It provides overarching gender principles of equality that can be integrated into the policy-making process for NGOs and all levels of government. The overall objective of the policy is to promote gender equity and equality through a clearly defined process of mainstreaming gender needs and concerns in policy and practice. Within the policy, institutional frameworks and mechanisms for designing, implementing, monitoring, and evaluating gender equality policies exist. Upon the adaptation of the National Gender Policy, MIGEPROF began developing and implementing programs to translate the policy into action.<sup>216</sup>

In an effort to enhance the National Gender Policy, the RPF requires all government departments to appoint a Director of Planning to act as a Gender Focal Point. These Gender Focal Points are responsible for monitoring the implementation progress of the National Gender Policy within their respective institutions and sectors, ensuring all policies, programs, and budgets are gender responsive. They also work to oversee the capacity needs in gender mainstreaming within their institutions.<sup>217</sup> The gender focal points receive basic gender awareness sensitization

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<sup>216</sup> Rwanda. Ministry of Gender and Family Promotion. *National Gender Policy*. March, 2009. Web. 15 Dec. 2012.

<sup>217</sup> Rwanda. Ministry of Gender and Family Promotion. *National Evaluation Report on Implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995) and the Outcome of the Twenty-third Special Session of the General Assembly (2000)*. Sept. 2009. Web. 15 Dec. 2012.

training, but through a study of gender budgeting in Rwanda, UNIFEM has found although gender focal points at higher levels of government are skilled in the area of gender mainstreaming, at local government levels, there seems to be a serious lack of gender awareness and skills, even with a Gender Focal Point.<sup>218</sup>

### **Gender Budgeting**

Since 2003, the RPF has been committed to gender responsive budgeting, which analyzes the government's budget according to its impact on both women and men, and gender relations.<sup>219</sup> The goal of gender budgeting is to mainstream gender perspectives into the development of public expenditures to ensure the RPF's priorities (which include gender equality) are achieved by an appropriately allocated budget. Gender budgeting is done in Rwanda's health, education, infrastructure, and agricultural sectors.<sup>220</sup> The African Capacity Building Foundation recognizes Rwanda's achievements in this sense:

“One of the major achievements of the gender budgeting initiatives has been to make gender concerns visible in government expenditures and revenues. In the specific case of Rwanda, gender budgeting became an integral part of a broader strategy by the government to reduce gender inequality through the development process.”<sup>221</sup>

Rwandan women MPs have been active in advocating for increased budget spending in both health and education throughout the country.

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<sup>218</sup>Mutamba, John and Cyuma Mbayiha. “Integrating Responsive Budgeting into the Aid Effectiveness Agenda. Rwanda Country Report.” United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UNIFEM). 2008. Print.

<sup>219</sup> The African Capacity Building Foundation. *Gender Budgeting in Africa: South Africa, Rwanda, and Uganda as Emerging Best Practice Countries*. 0-3. Zimbabwe. (May 2008). Web 15 Dec. 2012.

<sup>220</sup> Abbott, Pamela and Marklin Rucogoza. “Legal and Policy Framework for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women in Rwanda.” *The Institute of Policy Analysis and Research*. (June 2011): 1-21. Web. 15 Dec. 2012.

<sup>221</sup> The African Capacity Building Foundation, 2008. *Op.cit.*



## Education

In 2011, eight percent of the RPF's total budget was spend on education and increased just one percent in 2012.<sup>222</sup> Beyond budget spending, women MPs have been avid in pushing the importance of early education, as it is seen as the first step in building a better, more inclusive and equal society.<sup>223</sup> In an effort to increase the number of girls enrolled in primary school, women MPs introduced FAWE (Forum for African Women Educationalists) girls-only schools, a concept which was originally started in Kenya. In these schools, science and technology is promoted as is continuing education in secondary and post-secondary schools.<sup>224</sup> In 1999 when the first FAWE school was introduced, 160 female students were enrolled with 10 teachers. By the end of 2009, 700 female students were enrolled in five different FAWE schools with 35 teachers employed.<sup>225</sup>

The Girls' Empowerment Program was another project established by the RPF under the guidelines of the National Gender Policy in 2006. The program was first introduced at the Kigali Institute of Science and Technology (KIST) in an effort to increase the number of women receiving post-secondary education. It allowed 100 women who had just below the average grades required for either science, math or engineering programs to make up their deficit and gain a place at KIST. Upon the implementation and evaluation of the pilot program, it was found that the majority

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<sup>222</sup> Rwanda. Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning. *The National Budget: A Citizen's Guide 2011-2012*. Web. 15 Dec. 2012.

<sup>223</sup> Abbott, Pamela and John Rwihahira. "Millennium Development Goals Rwanda Country Report 2010." United Nations Development Programme. (2010) Web. 15 Dec. 2012.

<sup>224</sup> Stacey, Justine. Confidential. (Interview) Member of Parliament. Kigali, Rwanda. May 2010.

<sup>225</sup> Forum for African Women Educationalists. *FAWE Girls' School, Gisozi, Rwanda*. 2009. Web. 15 Dec. 2012.

of participants were doing extremely well with their studies, and the program continues to do date, involving more women.<sup>226</sup> By March 2011, over 30 percent of KIST's graduates were women, a huge increase from 2010 when only 18 percent of graduates were women. The increase of women graduates in 2010 was in large part due to the RPF's empowerment program, which had begun four years previously (the average time an undergraduate degree takes to complete).<sup>227</sup>

In 2008, the RPF passed a Girls Education Policy, which is aimed at achieving gender equality in education at all levels and has implemented a Girls' Education Task Force to collect data to track progress made. The early stages of implementing the policy included providing separate toilets for girls and boys in primary schools across the country in an effort to reduce the drop-out rate of girls.<sup>228</sup>

By 2010, Rwanda's primary school enrollment was 94 percent of all children, and girls were just as likely as boys to attend.<sup>229</sup> In 2002, the primary school completion rate for girls was only 29 percent, while in 2010 was up to 74 percent (compared to 65 percent for boys).<sup>230</sup> The number of youth enrolled in secondary schools increased from 11 percent in 2002, to 35 percent in 2010. Of this 35 percent, girls and boys are enrolled equally. However, in post-secondary education, women represent 41 percent of those enrolled, while men represent 59 percent.<sup>231</sup>

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<sup>226</sup> Abbott, Pamela and John Rwihahira, 2010. *Op.cit.*

<sup>227</sup> Kwizera, Charles. "750 Graduate at KIST." *The New Times Rwanda*. 25 March, 2011. Web. 15 Dec. 2012.

<sup>228</sup> Abbott, Pamela and Marklin Rucogoza, 2011. *Op.cit.*

<sup>229</sup> Abbott, Pamela and John Rwihahira, 2010. *Op.cit.*

<sup>230</sup> The World Bank. *Rwanda Development Indicators Databank*. Web. 15 Dec. 2012.

<sup>231</sup> Randell, Dr. Shirley and Dr. Jennifer Fisher. "Promoting the Retention of Women Faculty and Students in Higher Education: The Rwandan Case." *Women's Worlds 2008 Conference 10<sup>th</sup> International Interdisciplinary Congress on Women*. Madrid. (July, 2008). Web. 15 Dec. 2012.

## **Healthcare**

With increases to the RPF's healthcare budget as advocated by women MPs, we must now look at several health indicators and see if any real change has occurred. Rwanda's health budget increased from 3 percent (of total GDP) in 1998 to 10.5 percent in 2010 and women MPs are continuing to push for a further increase to 15 percent (which will be in line with the UN Millennium Development Goals).<sup>232</sup> According to the World Bank, Rwanda's maternal mortality rate decreased from 550 (per 100,000 live births) in 2005, to 340 in 2010 and its infant mortality rate decreased from 95 (per 1,000 live births) in 2005, to 59 in 2010.<sup>233</sup> Furthermore, women's life expectancy also grew from 50 years in 2002 to 56 years in 2010. The number of pregnant women receiving some form of pre-natal care increased from 94 percent in 2005 to 98 percent in 2010, and the number of births attended by skilled health staff increased from 38 percent in 2005 to 69 percent in 2010.<sup>234</sup> In terms of combining healthcare and education, the contraceptive prevalence for women between the ages of 15 and 49 in Rwanda also increased from 17 percent in 2005 to 51 percent in 2010.

## **Gender Based Violence**

One of the biggest achievements many Rwandan women MPs credit themselves and their cooperation with grassroots women's organizations with is the passing of the Gender Based Violence (GBV) law in 2009. Although the law is almost three years old, gender-based violence remains a significant problem in Rwanda and

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<sup>232</sup> World Health Organization. *Rwanda*. (2010). Web. 15 Dec. 2012.

<sup>233</sup> The World Bank. *Rwanda Development Indicators Databank*. Web. 15 Dec. 2012.

<sup>234</sup> *Ibid.*

often goes unreported. However, there has been an obvious effort made by the RPF since the enactment of the law. MPs frequently visit their communities to talk with and educate both women and men about the law and why violence will not be tolerated.<sup>235</sup> Furthermore, several mechanisms have been established by the government including a Gender Desk in police stations, a One Stop Centre for victims of GBV, and a Men's Resource Centre in an effort to make reporting, treating, and preventing GBV more accessible.

The Gender Desk that exists (since 2005) in the Kigali Police Station's main priority is to prevent GBV and sensitize all Rwandans on the issues of violence and how to avoid it. Public awareness is a large priority of the Gender Desk as the law on GBV is fairly new and in order for the law to be effective, women and men must understand their rights. Public awareness is done through advertisements on television and radio, quarterly magazines, posters and billboards, as well as police officers going to rural communities to encourage people to report incidents. In terms of fighting GBV, community police are made up of women and men (30 percent of community police must be women) and together they help sensitize local leaders and men and women within communities. Sensitization is done specifically for women's grassroots groups and organizations on the unique role women can play in preventing GBV. Furthermore, community policing has been created where ordinary citizens are elected by their community to report incidents and watch over community on-goings. These local community representatives work hand-in-hand with police, report their observations, and encourage people to report crime and

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<sup>235</sup> Stacey, Justine. John Mutamba, UNIFEM Gender Specialist. (Interview) Kigali, Rwanda. May 2010.

instances of GBV. A GBV telephone hotline also exists for individuals to anonymously talk to someone about incidences and experiences of GBV, and to discover options for moving forward.<sup>236</sup>

The Desk also serves as a research tool for GBV and keeps the government in check by establishing gaps within existing GBV policy and frameworks. It also uses international gender-equality commitments and from them establishes programs that can be developed to fit Rwanda's situation specifically. Upon recommendations from the Gender Desk, it was established GBV incidents require not only policing and reporting, but also counseling, healthcare, and increased awareness. Thus, the Isange One Stop Center was opened within the National Police Hospital (located in Kigali), in the summer of 2010 to provide Rwandans with a more holistic response to GBV. The Centre is a place where survivors of GBV can go to report an incident, receive medical attention and psychological counseling, and recuperate. It also aids the police in quickly and effectively attaining medical evidence to be used in court.<sup>237</sup>

In addition to the Gender Desk and One Stop Centre, Rwanda's women-based umbrella organization *Pro-Femmes* established the Rwanda Men's Resource Centre (which is located directly beside *Pro-Femmes'* head office in Kigali).<sup>238</sup> The Mission of the Centre "focuses on mobilizing Rwandan men to support women's leadership; to contribute to the eradication of men's violence against women; and to serve as role models for the promotion of positive masculine behaviors. Building alliances

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<sup>236</sup> Anderson, Letitia. "GBV Offices: A Sign of Progress in UN Women Partnership with Rwandan Police." *UNIFEM*. (April, 2007) Web. 15 Dec. 2012.

<sup>237</sup> Stacey, Justine (May 2010) [Field notes collected on-site at the Isange One Stop Centre Official Opening Ceremonies in Kigali, Rwanda] Unpublished raw data.

<sup>238</sup> Stacey, Justine. John Mutamba, UNIFEM Gender Specialist. (Interview) Kigali, Rwanda. May 2010.

and partnership with women organizations to promote women's rights and interests is central."<sup>239</sup> The majority of the Centre's objectives are to prevent GBV by engaging men in discussions, information-sharing, altering attitudes and cultural traditions, and providing general information and resources on masculinity, laws, and the significance of gender equality in the development and well-being of Rwanda as a whole.<sup>240</sup> The Centre is currently focusing on a mass mobilization and sensitization campaign by partnering with development organizations and schools throughout the country in an effort to engage men and boys to adopt positive masculine behaviours.

The passing of Rwanda's Gender-Based Violence (GBV) law in 2008 was a huge milestone for many women MPs who for years, worked towards the creation and implementation of the law. As we have seen, several significant mechanisms and programs have been established in Rwanda to enforce and facilitate the GBV law. In its 2010 annual report, Rwanda's Gender Monitoring Office (GMO) presented statistics that showed the number of reported incidences of GBV in each district of Rwanda. In 2008 1,867 cases were reported throughout Rwanda's districts, while in 2009 the number of reported cases increased to 2,249.<sup>241</sup> Although it may seem alarming that this number has increased significantly within a year, it is important to note that just because the number of incidences that are *reported* has increased, does not necessarily mean that the actual number of incidences has increased. Many Rwandan officials believe since the GBV law and its provisions is so new, women are

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<sup>239</sup> Rwanda Men's Resource Centre Official website. *Mission Statement*. Web. 15 Dec. 2012.

<sup>240</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>241</sup> Rwanda. Gender Monitoring Office. *Annual Report January 2009- June 2010*. Web. 15 Dec. 2012.

becoming increasingly more comfortable with reporting violence and abuse because they now have the formal rights and resources to do so. Thus, it will likely take several more years of GBV monitoring and reporting to know if incidences are actually increasing or if it is simply the number of women who are comfortable and able to report violence that is increasing.

### **Economic Empowerment**

Economic empowerment for women is one of the main overarching goals of many Rwandan women MPs. Of the women MPs interviewed for the purposes of this research, all participants stated increased economic opportunities and empowerment for women was a large priority when lobbying and/or discussing new policies and programs. It seems many women leaders believe that with women's legalized rights to land ownership, a reduction of GBV, an increase in primary, secondary and post-secondary education enrollment, as well as an increase in healthcare expenditures, women will be able to become increasingly economically active. With laws and programs in place to formally enhance these areas, the RPF has also created programs that simply make it easier for women to access bank loans, and register small businesses. For example, under the National Gender Policy the RPF introduced the Women's Guarantee Fund in 2007. The fund is an initiative to increase the number of women entrepreneurs in Rwanda by providing a 50 percent guarantee for a bank or microfinance loan that a Rwandan woman takes out to start up an enterprise or small business.<sup>242</sup>

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<sup>242</sup> Abbott, Pamela and John Rwihahira, 2010. *Op.cit.*

Now I will consider statistical data and consider whether or not the majority of women have reaped the benefits of these women-focused laws, policies and programs. In this section, it is important to note due to a lack of statistical data, it is difficult to track the employment gains Rwandan women have made.

In 2005, the employment rate of Rwandan women was actually higher than men (64 percent, compared to 51 percent), but the large majority of this employment was in the agricultural sector, where women are paid comparatively less than men. Agricultural activities support the livelihoods of 84 percent of all Rwandans and by 2009, women represented 86 percent of Rwanda's farming population.<sup>243</sup> However, an alarmingly high percentage of the agricultural work women were participating in (72 percent) was unpaid family agricultural labour.<sup>244</sup> Furthermore, only 11 percent of women have formal land title representation (compared to 21 percent of men), deeming women MPs' law on Land Succession basically irrelevant. Although the overall percentage of Rwanda's population living below the poverty line decreased from 56 percent in 2005 to 45 percent in 2010, women's formal economic involvement remains very low. Even with the establishment of the Women's Guarantee Fund, in 2008 the percentage of loans granted to Rwandan women was only 26 percent and they participated in only 9 percent of wage employment (non-agricultural work).<sup>245</sup> Due to a lack of statistical data, it is difficult to establish if women's economic participation and wages have

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<sup>243</sup> Rwanda. Ministry of Gender and Family Promotion. *Strategic Plan for the Implementation of the National Gender Policy*. June, 2009. Web. 15 Dec. 2012.

<sup>244</sup> Rwanda. Gender Monitoring Office. *Annual Report January 2009- June 2010*. Web. 15 Dec. 2012.

<sup>245</sup> Rwanda. National Institute of Statistics in Rwanda. Rwanda Statistical Data Portal. Web. 15 Dec. 2012.



shown any improvement since women's numbers increased in parliament. Regardless, as has been demonstrated by the statistics that *are* available, women's representation in paid employment remains low.

Since the majority of Rwanda's economy is based in agricultural work, it is important to consider progress that has been made in terms of land ownership and control for Rwandan women. As we are aware, due to the RPF's Inheritance Law, Rwandan women are currently legally recognized as having rights on their husbands' land when the land is registered and both spouses' names are on the registration document. In 2010, the GMO reported that a "large number" of married women had registered land with their husbands and both spouses' names were included on registration documents. This of course, is a positive determining factor for women in terms of their rights and agricultural economic advancement. However, it is important to note that when a woman and man are not legally married but co-habiting, they do not enjoy legalized, shared rights to their land and because of cultural traditions and economic practices, women in these situations often do not maintain rights over the land they farm. As of 2009, only 10 percent of Rwandan women had formal, documented ownership over land titles. This is largely due to the fact that regardless of marital status, there are many women and men living in rural areas of Rwanda who simply remain unaware of the need to legally register their land in order to maintain individual rights over it.<sup>246</sup>

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<sup>246</sup> Rwanda Initiative for Sustainable Development. "Impact of the Land Reform on the Land Rights and Economic Poverty Reduction of the Majority Rural, Especially Women Who Depend on their Land for their Livelihood." Annie Kairaba and James Daale Simons (Eds.) 2011. Web . 15 Dec. 2012.

Although it may take more time to see real, statistical improvements regarding women's employment and land ownership, Bella Rukwavu, coordinator of Kigali's women's-based 'Agaseke Project' believes a change in mindset regarding empowerment and gender roles throughout many areas of Rwanda has been significant since more women became political leaders in 2003. Rukwavu states, "people are realizing that women can contribute to a family's income, thus reducing the dependency and pressure on men. A woman who is economically empowered creates benefits for the entire family and more and more men are realizing this."<sup>247</sup> Similarly, John Mutamba, Gender Specialist at UNIFEM Rwanda, believes "women have become more confident in civil society because they have strong and powerful role models in important positions of leadership."<sup>248</sup>

In an international conference hosted by the Forum of Rwandan Women Parliamentarians in May 2010, Deputy Secretary General of the UN Dr. Aisha Rose-Migiro stated, "Rwanda has reached and surpassed its target for gender equity according to the UN's Millennium Development Goals."<sup>249</sup> As has been demonstrated, Rwandan women have experienced several improvements in education, healthcare, political involvement, land ownership, and economic involvement. However, as has also become clear, there is still much need for continued improvements for women in all of these areas of development, especially in the economic and land ownership

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<sup>247</sup> Stacey, Justine. Bella Rukwavu, Agaseke Project Coordinator. (Interview) Kigali, Rwanda. May, 2010.

<sup>248</sup> Stacey, Justine. John Mutamba, UNIFEM Rwanda Gender Specialist. (Interview) Kigali, Rwanda. May, 2010.

<sup>249</sup> Rose-Migiro, Dr. Aisha. (May 2010) [Field notes collected during "International Forum on the Role of Leadership in Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment" conference in Kigali, Rwanda] Unpublished raw data.

sector. Zainab Salbi (Iraqi-American writer, women's activist, and co-founder and president of Women for Women International) stated, "Rwandan women could celebrate what has been done, but instead, they hold an international conference to discuss what more they can do."<sup>250</sup>

It is necessary to recognize and analyze the factors that have proved to be obstacles for Rwandan women as well as women MPs to understand why for example, the number of women involved in the non-agricultural sector of the economy is so low, and how this can be improved moving forward. However, before we begin an analysis of the obstacles and recommendations, we must first look at the factors that have contributed to the empowerment of Rwandan women MPs and their ability to increasingly push women-focused legislation. What this thesis seeks to answer is if the parliamentary gender quota and resulting increase in women MPs has resulted in an increase in women-focused laws and policies. There has indeed been an increase in women-focused laws, policies, and programs that promote equality in Rwanda. What I will find in the following section is that the quota has not been the only driving force behind the increase in women-focused law and policy changes we have seen. Although the quota has played a role, several other significant factors including a history of a strong women's movement and genocide have been interconnected with one another to ultimately empower women MPs to push for and create the laws, policies, and implementation mechanisms I have just reviewed.

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<sup>250</sup> Salbi, Zainab. (May 2010) [Field notes collected during "International Forum on the Role of Leadership in Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment" conference in Kigali, Rwanda] Unpublished raw data.

## **Chapter 4:**

### **Why the Success? Parliamentary Gender Quota is Not the Only Factor**

Regarding the increase in women MPs and women-focused legislation in Rwanda, Elizabeth Powley argues “the dramatic gains for women are a result of specific mechanisms used to increase women’s political participation, among them a constitutional guarantee, quota system, and innovative electoral structures.”<sup>251</sup> However, Timothy Longman importantly recognizes we cannot attribute women’s empowerment and the changes that have been made solely to Rwanda’s parliamentary gender quota. Longman states, “the rise in women’s political participation can’t be attributed to the quota alone since the number of women in non-reserved seats has increased drastically.”<sup>252</sup> As was outlined at the end of Chapter Two, women’s representation has gone beyond what the 30 percent parliamentary gender quota requires, and women currently hold a combined total of 48 percent of the seats in Rwanda’s Upper and Lower House. Sam Mandela, Director of Protocol in Rwanda’s Parliament recognizes the parliamentary gender quota of 2003 was good as a form of positive discrimination to put women in positions they wouldn’t otherwise have had because of the mindset of men being the dominant leaders, especially in politics. However, Mandela states, “Currently [in 2010] the quota is barely acknowledged and hardly even seems necessary because so many

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<sup>251</sup> Powley, Elizabeth. “Rwanda: The Impact of Women Legislators on Policy Outcomes Affecting Children and Families”. *The State of the World’s Children 2007*. (Dec. 2008): 1-18. Web. 15 Dec. 2012.

<sup>252</sup> Longman, Timothy. “Rwanda’s Paradox: Gender Equality or Emerging Authoritarianism?” Gretchen Bauer and Hannah E. Britton (Eds.) *Women in African Parliaments*. (2005): 210-233. Web. 15 Dec. 2012.

women have been voted in well beyond what the quota requires.”<sup>253</sup> This section will outline the causal factors that show us not only why Rwandan women MPs numbers have increased so significantly in the past decade but why these women have been so effective in pushing women-focused legislation, which already we have seen has had positive effects on gender equality.

### **1. History of a Strong Women’s Movement**

As was noted in Chapter Two, in Rwanda, the women’s movement has been extremely vibrant and strong since the beginning of the 1980s, which is consequently when Rwanda signed on to the provisions of CEDAW (1981). In 2002, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) presented a report on the challenges faced by Rwandan civil society in the aftermath of genocide. The report commended the significant role women’s-based NGOs played in shaping public policy and concluded that women’s organizations were one of the most vibrant and influential sectors of civil society in Rwanda.<sup>254</sup> Catharine Newbury and Hannah Baldwin both recognize although women’s organizations were strong in pre-genocide Rwanda, post-genocide there was a huge increase in the number of these groups as well as the scope of their activities. Newbury and Baldwin believe “women’s groups provided the country [Rwanda] one of its few enduring social

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<sup>253</sup> Stacey, Justine. Sam Mandela, Director of Protocol in Parliament. (Interview) May, 2010. Kigali, Rwanda.

<sup>254</sup> Powley, Elizabeth. “Rwanda: Women Hold Up Half the Parliament.” *Women in Parliament: Beyond Numbers*. (2004): 154-163. Web. 15 Dec. 2012.

continuities [post-genocide].”<sup>255</sup> Understanding Rwanda’s women’s movement as a factor in empowering women MPs to push women-focused policy is extremely important and relevant. What we will see in Rwanda is the progression of an informal, grassroots women’s movement that was able to outlast the implications of patriarchal values, survive genocide, and rebuild a country, essentially leaving the government no choice but to ensure a minimum representation of women at all levels of leadership.

In 1992, thirteen Rwandan women’s-based organizations decided to combine their efforts to create a national umbrella women’s organization called *Pro-Femmes*. The organization’s goal is to eradicate all forms of discrimination towards Rwandan women and to promote their socio-economic, political, and legal status. Currently, *Pro-Femmes* has over 50 member organizations across Rwanda.<sup>256</sup> In 1997, the Rwanda Women’s Network was created as an NGO with a goal of improving the socio-economic welfare of Rwandan women. The organization provides healthcare to victims of gender-based violence, education and awareness regarding women’s legal rights, economic empowerment, and community advocacy and networking. The Women’s Network combined with various organizations working under *Pro-Femmes* had a significant influence on policy outcomes in the mid to late 1990s. Both groups were extremely influential in the establishment of both MIGEPROF and the FFRP, and lobbied the transitional government in 1999 to not only change the Succession Law, giving women the legal right to land ownership, but also to adopt

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<sup>255</sup> Newbury, Catharine and Hannah Baldwin. “Aftermath: Women’s Organizations in Post-Conflict Rwanda.” *US Agency for International Development*. Washington (July 2000): 1-13. Web. 15 Dec. 2012.

<sup>256</sup> Pro-Femmes/Twese Hamwe. Organization Handbook. Kigali, Rwanda. May 2010.

and implement elected women's councils at the grassroots level in each community within Rwanda. Jennie E. Burnet recognizes the extreme significance of the establishment of the Succession law and women's councils as they represented "the collaboration between women in government and in civil society."<sup>257</sup>

As women's organizations and influence in society began to grow, so too did the government's realization that women needed to be formally represented in decision-making bodies at all levels throughout the country. By the time the RPF took power in 2003 under Paul Kagame, it was clear that women would not stand for anything other than formal recognition in not only parliament, but in all decision-making bodies of Rwanda's government.

Deputy Secretary General of the UN Dr. Aisha Rose-Migiro believes women's development organizations play a key role in holding governments accountable regarding gender mainstreaming and that in Rwanda, women's organizations continually do this in a very positive way.<sup>258</sup> Josephine Uwamariya, Country Director of ActionAid in Kigali, Rwanda says members of the organization, including herself, continually communicate and work with women MPs to advocate for vulnerable women and children in the country. Uwamariya says MPs and in particular women MPs have consistently been willing to listen and cooperate with ActionAid. Even before the quota was introduced in 2003, Uwamariya says her organization constantly communicated with and lobbied the government. For example,

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<sup>257</sup> Burnet, Jennie E. "Gender Balance and the Meanings of Women in Governance in Post-Genocide Rwanda." *African Affairs*. 107. (28 May 2008): 361-386. Web. 15 Dec. 2012.

<sup>258</sup> Rose-Migiro, Dr. Aisha. (May 2010) [Field notes collected during "International Forum on the Role of Leadership in Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment" conference in Kigali, Rwanda] Unpublished raw data.

“ActionAid provided one of the biggest pushes to the government for the Inheritance Law to change and include women in 1999.”<sup>259</sup> Beninya Izabiriza, National Secretary of *Pro-Femmes* in 2010, points out before 2003, one of the organization’s main goals was to get women into positions of leadership. Now that women occupy these roles, *Pro-Femmes* continues to work closely with the RPF in ensuring women are educated on how to vote as well as campaign for leadership positions. Furthermore, Izabiriza states “members of *Pro-Femmes* are continually invited to MP-led meetings regarding gender issues, gender budgeting, and gender mainstreaming in policy-making.” Izabiriza describes *Pro-Femmes*’ working relationship with MPs as strong and has noticed “since 2003, women have become increasingly empowered in areas of education, economics, and politics.”<sup>260</sup>

Furthermore, many women MPs attribute their experiences as mothers as one of their most significant motivations for becoming involved in politics. Several women MPs recognize that as girls, there were many things they could not do simply because they were girls. This alone serves as a large motivating force behind these women MPs efforts to bring about change and equality through legislation so that their daughters and families can eventually appreciate equal opportunities. Powley recognizes that many Western feminists may argue associating women’s empowerment in politics with motherhood is backwards and regressive. However, Powley argues this view is truly authentic in Rwanda stating, “it is non-threatening,

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<sup>259</sup> Stacey, Justine. Josephine Uwamariya, ActionAid Country Director. (Interview) Kigali, Rwanda. 24 May 2010.

<sup>260</sup> Stacey, Justine. Beninya Izabiriza, *Pro-Femmes* National Secretary. (Interview) Kigali, Rwanda. 28 May 2010.



based in the reality of most women's experiences, and has been successfully used as an argument for women seeking to gain entrance to decision-making positions and to influence policy."<sup>261</sup>

With an understanding of the hugely significant women's movement in Rwanda, it is necessary to return to Dr. Rowlands' definition of empowerment. With the parliamentary gender quota, Rwandan women were empowered in that they gained access to decision-making through their parliamentary posts and committee positions. However, as Dr. Rowlands has pointed out, being empowered also must include "power from within", which involves women perceiving themselves as capable and entitled to occupy positions of decision-making and leadership.<sup>262</sup> Based on the history of Rwanda's women's movement and women's-based organizations, it is quite clear Rwandan women MPs embody this definition of empowerment. This can be assumed because it was Rwandan women themselves that through small organizations worked together to rebuild their country after the genocide in 1994, establishing larger networks that would eventually lobby the government to formally recognize and ensure positions of leadership, for which they had proved they deserved.

## **2. Genocide**

As we learned in Chapter Two, after the genocide in 1994, 70 percent of Rwanda's active members of society was composed of women. That is, the majority of men had either fled, been murdered, or were in jail immediately following the

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<sup>261</sup> Powley, Elizabeth, 2008. *Op.cit.*

<sup>262</sup> Rowlands, Jo. "Empowerment Examined." Deborah Eade (Ed.) *Development and Social Diversity*. Oxfam: UK and Ireland. (1996): 86-93. Web. 15 Dec. 2012.

genocide leaving women to head households and provide for their families for the first time. Elizabeth Powley recognizes, “the genocide forced women to think of themselves differently and in many cases develop skills they would not otherwise have acquired.”<sup>263</sup> Likewise, Catharine Newbury and Hannah Baldwin points out “it was in the context of severe crisis, where the state lacked the means to meet critical needs that women began to seek ways of cooperating to confront common problems.”<sup>264</sup> Due to the female-majority active population, pre-existing networks established through women’s-based organizations, and the fact that there was literally no choice but to start re-building, Tutsi and Hutu women alike began to work together to support their livelihoods and reunite families. Although obviously difficult at first, women quickly and efficiently began to form groups, rebuild their communities, and were able to look past ethnic differences. Former Speaker of Rwanda’s parliament Joseph Sebarenzi stated,

“It is impossible to predict what would have happened to the women’s movement in Rwanda if the genocide had never occurred. Such events irreversibly change the landscape of the human experience. Challenges and opportunities are not mutually exclusive; rather, they have proven to often be two sides of the same coin.”<sup>265</sup>

Rwandan women’s experience surviving the genocide and rebuilding afterward was significant in terms of strengthening the women’s movement that lobbied the government to formally include women in leadership positions. However, it also showed the government and a patriarchal society women were in

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<sup>263</sup> Powley, Elizabeth, 2008. *Op.cit.*

<sup>264</sup> Newbury, Catharine and Hannah Baldwin, 2000. *Op.cit.*

<sup>265</sup> Goldfaden, Marissa B. “Triumph Over Tragedy: The Women’s Movement of Rwanda Finds Success Post-Genocide”. *Student Pulse Academic Journal*. 2.01. (Jan. 2010) Web. 15 Dec. 2012.

fact strong leaders, capable of overcoming devastation and proactively making changes to better themselves, their families, and their communities.

### **3. International Aid and Support**

Parliamentary gender quotas are a “modern” development. As was previously discussed, international treaties such as CEDAW and UN Security Council Resolutions have played an important role in various governments’ decisions to adopt quotas. Due to international support of gender quotas, many international institutions and aid agencies are much more likely to provide larger amounts of monetary aid to countries that are initiating gender quotas.<sup>266</sup> In the early 1990s, the UN and several aid organizations began targeting women and children for assistance in war-torn, underdeveloped countries. Women’s organizations throughout Rwanda benefitted greatly from this. For example, from 1995 to 1999, USAID gave over \$3 million (USD) to a program called “Women in Transition”, which provided over 1800 grants to women’s-based organizations throughout Rwanda.<sup>267</sup> Post-genocide guilt also meant that in 1996, the international community pledged \$79 million towards Rwanda’s agricultural development and rural communities, with a focus on women who had been left widowed from the genocide.<sup>268</sup> Although aid agencies were extremely important in providing women’s organizations with the funding and resources they needed to rebuild post-genocide, Emma Diaz points out the significant role Rwandan women played in creating and maintaining international

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<sup>266</sup> Paxton, Pamela, Sheri Kunovich and Melanie M. Hughes. “Gender in Politics.” *Annual Review of Sociology*. 33.0. (2007) Web 2012.

<sup>267</sup> Burnet, Jennie E., 2008. *Op.cit.*

<sup>268</sup> Diaz, Emma. “The Role of Women on the Redevelopment of Rwanda.” *Perspectives on Global Issues*. New York University. Web. 15 Dec. 2012.

aid partnerships. Diaz states, “without the partnerships that these women [Rwandan women post-genocide who took on the task of re-building] created locally and internationally, many areas of Rwanda would not have received the aid necessary to rebuild their agricultural structures.”<sup>269</sup>

The United Nations Development Program (UNDP) has also shown consistent support for Rwanda’s current government (the RPF) through positive reports and praise, and continual aid giving in large amounts. Currently, the UNDP believes Rwandan women members of parliament have been able to reinforce their institutional capacities through the Rwandan government. It has reported that the RPF and its quota system have allowed for successful lobbying by women working towards the adoption of legislative frameworks regarding gender equality and the protection of women’s rights, and has successfully mainstreamed gender into the parliamentary structure.<sup>270</sup>

With much needed funding and resources (that had been destroyed during the genocide), Rwandan women’s organizations were able to develop much faster and have a larger effect on not only when lobbying the government, but on development throughout the country as a whole.

#### **4. The RPF and Paul Kagame**

Well before Paul Kagame became president of Rwanda in 2003, he was vocal about his genuine appreciation for Rwanda’s history of having a strong women’s

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<sup>269</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>270</sup> United Nations Development Programme Rwanda. (Feb. 2007) *Women Parliamentarians International Conference under the Theme “Gender, Nation Building and the Role of Parliaments*. Web. 15 Dec. 2012.

movement and the efforts that were made by Rwandan women post-genocide to rebuild society. Kagame has stated, “we can’t be satisfied when women perform two thirds of the world’s work and produce over half the food we eat, but only have 10 percent of the world’s income.”<sup>271</sup>

Long before the introduction of a parliamentary gender quota, women played an important role in Kagame’s political movement. Women were actively involved in the RPF’s exile movement prior to the genocide, which gave them an advantage when it came to advocating for women’s increased formal recognition and representation within government in 2003. In post-genocide Rwanda, the first Minister of women’s affairs was Aloisea Inyumba who had previously served as the RPF’s Commission of Finance. Many now consider Inyumba the “founding mother” of gender issues in post-genocide Rwanda.<sup>272</sup> Furthermore, during the transitional period post-genocide, the RPF consistently appointed women to almost 50 percent of the seats it maintained as a political party in Parliament.<sup>273</sup>

In a 2010 international conference hosted by the Forum of Women Parliamentarians in Kigali, Kagame emphasized his government’s plans to continue shaping and implementing policies that empower women, so as to “sustain the momentum” Rwanda has created in moving towards women’s empowerment and

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<sup>271</sup> Kagame, Paul. (May 2010) [Field notes collected during “International Forum on the Role of Leadership in Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment” conference in Kigali, Rwanda] Unpublished raw data.

<sup>272</sup> Powley, Elizabeth, 2008. *Op.cit.*

<sup>273</sup> *Ibid.*

gender equality.<sup>274</sup> Zainab Salbi believes many political leaders “talk the talk but don’t walk the walk” when it comes to women’s issues. Salbi believes Kagame is a good example of a leader that “talks the talk *and* walks the walk regarding women’s issues and empowerment.”<sup>275</sup>

From research in the field, Elizabeth Powley has found women MPs work closely with their male counterparts, which has resulted in “government officials at all levels to talk about women’s contributions, their participation, the centrality of gender considerations to their efforts, and also the progress that has yet to be made.”<sup>276</sup> Furthermore, Timothy Longman recognizes, “the RPF’s commitment to placing women in political positions at all levels of government and administration has meant that most Rwandans have had contact with women officials.”<sup>277</sup> This Longman believes is important simply in that it begins to change traditional stereotypes on the role women and men play within society.

### **5. Gender Quota Entrenched in Constitution**

The fact that the RPF chose to entrench a gender quota for all levels of decision-making in Rwanda’s 2003 Constitution, shows that it intended to follow through with enforcing the quota and ensuring women were politically represented. Julie Ballington recognizes the enforcement mechanisms for a parliamentary gender quota are extremely important because they determine the effectiveness and

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<sup>274</sup> Kagame, Paul. (May 2010) [Field notes collected during “International Forum on the Role of Leadership in Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment” conference in Kigali, Rwanda] Unpublished raw data.

<sup>275</sup> Salbi, Zainab. (May 2010) [Field notes collected during “International Forum on the Role of Leadership in Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment” conference in Kigali, Rwanda] Unpublished raw data.

<sup>276</sup> Powley, Elizabeth, 2008. *Op.cit.*

<sup>277</sup> Longman, Timothy, 2005. *Op.cit.*

implementation of the quota. Ballington believes “many quota laws are merely window dressing, as they are not enforced in practice.”<sup>278</sup> However, the RPF has entrenched not only its gender quota in the Constitution under Chapter II, Article 9, (Appendix 3) but also entrenched the Gender Monitoring Office (Appendix 4) as well as the National Council of Women (Appendix 5).

Clearly, there are several significant factors unique to Rwanda, that have contributed to not only the establishment of the parliamentary gender quota, but to the success of the women MPs that have been elected as a result. Understanding these factors is significant in that they help us understand the complexity of the issues surrounding gender quotas and women’s political participation. The lesson to be learned from Rwanda is that there is not one single form of affirmative action that can be put in place to enhance the numbers and effectiveness of women leaders. Instead, it is a combination of civil war, historically strong grassroots women’s movement, a Proportional Representation electoral system, and fervent political will of the RPF that has established a parliamentary system in which women have been active and empowered representatives.

Paul Kagame although proud of how far women have come in Parliament, openly recognizes that there are still challenges and many obstacles to overcome in enhancing gender equality throughout Rwanda. He recognizes “the struggle to achieve gender equality doesn’t cease when we achieve a few victories... ..leaders must be held accountable by their peers... good intentions, especially regarding

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<sup>278</sup> Ballington, Julie. “The Implementation of Quotas: African Experiences.” *The Institute for Electoral and Democracy Assistance*. (2004): 1-131. Print.

gender equality, simply are not enough.”<sup>279</sup> Kagame ultimately believes continued visible improvements in equality and women’s empowerment are the only acceptable measures in moving forward.<sup>280</sup> Despite gender-focused policies and programs, as well as some vast improvements in several areas of development for women including education, healthcare, and access to resources, there are still some major obstacles that need to be overcome in order for women MPs to continue to work towards gender equality in Rwanda.

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<sup>279</sup> Kagame, Paul. (May 2010) [Field notes collected during “International Forum on the Role of Leadership in Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment” conference in Kigali, Rwanda] Unpublished raw data.

<sup>280</sup> *Ibid.*



## **CHAPTER 5:**

### **Moving Forward: Current Obstacles and what this means for Development**

As was reviewed in Chapter One, many gender theorists believe that with the inclusion of more women in parliament, a political system becomes increasingly democratic. However, when a system lacks democratic tendencies to begin with, whether or not women are represented does not make a difference. In Rwanda, the RPF and Kagame have encountered significant criticism over the years due to some obvious authoritarian tendencies. This is the first major obstacle women MPs continue to encounter.

Secondly, the emphasis the RPF has put on urban development over rural development is alarming, especially considering over 80 percent of Rwanda's population lives in rural areas. Similarly, as we have seen, women are still severely underrepresented in the formal economic sector and rural women experience the highest level of poverty in Rwanda, which means feminized poverty remains a serious issue.

Lastly, as more women are entering formal, political positions, women's-based organizations are experiencing a "brain drain" of strong women leaders, which as some gender scholars point out is risky, especially where rural development is so lacking for women.

This section will examine the obstacles that exist and continue to hinder women's empowerment and gender equality until changes and improvements are made.

## 1. Authoritarian Tendencies of the RPF

The inclusion of women in parliament strengthens the authenticity of democracy, but many scholars and researchers have questioned by including women equally, is Kagame simply trying to mask authoritarianism and legitimize his regime's tactics? As discussed in the literature, Pamela Paxton recognizes, "women's presence in high numbers [in parliaments] may be less meaningful if they are unable to truly affect policy."<sup>281</sup> Unfortunately, throughout many developing countries Paxton's fear is a reality, because regardless of the adoption of a gender quota, when the state acts undemocratically and inhibits MPs and all citizen's rights, women, an already marginalized social group within the realm of politics, do not stand a chance at having their voices heard.

Although the RPF considers itself democratic, and does indeed hold regular elections where all citizens are eligible to vote, over the past few years it has received a significant amount of international criticism for having authoritarian tendencies, with very few opposition parties, opposition leaders disappearing, and a crackdown on freedom of speech, especially within the media.

In 1994, Rwanda established its first post-genocide transitional government of national unity and the multi-party system included moderate Hutu politicians. However, by mid-1995, many prominent Hutu leaders had resigned from their positions within the transitional government in what Timothy Longman believes was a protest over lack of "real power". From that point onward, several scholars

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<sup>281</sup> Paxton, Pamela, Sheri Kunovich and Melanie M. Hughes. "Gender in Politics." *Annual Review of Sociology*. 33.0. (2007) Print.

and political scientists argue power has become increasingly concentrated in the hands of the former Tutsi refugees and the RPF.<sup>282</sup>

Helen Hintjens argues the RPF has clearly become increasingly authoritarian because almost all forms of political opposition have been “unofficially criminalized”. Rwandans who express critical political views have usually been subject to imprisonment and some have even “mysteriously disappeared”.<sup>283</sup> The Liberal Party and the Social Democratic Party are the only two active political parties outside of the RPF in Rwanda. These two parties present few critiques of the RPF and have been known to work closely with Kagame’s government.<sup>284</sup> Over the past decade, there has also been a noticeable intolerance for independent expression, particularly through the media and political opposition. “Anyone who publicly criticizes the regime [RPF] risks being labeled ‘divisionist’, a supporter of social division and genocide”<sup>285</sup> and is subject to imprisonment and in some instances, exile.

On the other hand, James Wizeye, (First Secretary at the Rwanda High Commission in London) believes the criticisms of the RPF and accusations of Kagame’s “increasing levels of authoritarianism” are one-sided, unfair opinions. Wizeye instead emphasizing the accomplishments of Kagame and the RPF outlining developments of its judicial administration, the implementation of an independent

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<sup>282</sup> Longman, Timothy. “Rwanda’s Paradox: Gender Equality or Emerging Authoritarianism?” Gretchen Bauer and Hannah E. Britton (Eds.) *Women in African Parliaments*. (2005): 210-233. Web. 15 Dec. 2012.

<sup>283</sup> Hintjens, Helen. “Post-genocide Identity Politics in Rwanda.” *Ethnicities*. 8.5. (2008) Web. 15 Dec. 2012.

<sup>284</sup> Longman, Timothy, 2005. *Op.cit.*

<sup>285</sup> *Ibid.*

ombudsman, the elimination of capital punishment, and the implementation of a UN-approved trial system for perpetrators of the genocide. Furthermore, Wizeye argues a system of checks and balances is in place and the RPF has been adamant in cracking down on government and business officials who abuse their positions of power. Wizeye believes the fact that some government officials have resigned and fled is a sign that “corrupt practices will no longer be tolerated” and this is “something that should be applauded, not criticized.”<sup>286</sup> Wizeye brings up an extremely important point, in that to compare Rwanda to a developed, European country that has enjoyed years of democracy, access to resources, and peaceful neighbours, is completely unfair. As we are aware, the majority of Rwanda’s post-Independence years have seen enormous amounts of turmoil, conflict, and insecurity.<sup>287</sup> Thus, simply discrediting the RPF for its unprecedented accomplishments and leaps toward development despite being ripped apart by genocide in 1994 Wizeye argues, is completely uncalled for.

Likewise, Wallace Warfield and Ashad Sentongo argue,

“Underneath [the surface of the RPF] is a leadership considered to be genuine in its commitment to socio-economic development as well as good governance, even if it diverges in some respects from western norms.”<sup>288</sup>

Warfield and Sentongo believe through the decentralization of power via local governments at each level of society (sector, district, municipality, etc.), the RPF’s political reforms have shown true democratic transformation.<sup>289</sup>

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<sup>286</sup> Wizeye, James. “Rwanda’s ‘Authoritarian’ Leader has Rescued his Country from Genocide.” *The Guardian*. Aug. 29, 2012. Web. 15 Dec. 2012.

<sup>287</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>288</sup> Warfield, Wallace and Ashad Sentongo. “Political Leadership and Conflict Resolution: An African Example.” *African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes AJCR*. 11.2. South Africa. (2011) Web. 15 Dec. 2012.

On the more extreme side of the equation, Dambisa Moyo (who holds an Oxford University PhD in economics and was formerly a consultant for the World Bank) believes at the early stages of development in a post-conflict society, democracy is irrelevant and may even be harmful. Amid rival parties and varying interests, Moyo believes it can be difficult for democratic regimes in underdeveloped countries to push through beneficial legislation to enhance socio-economic development. Moyo states, “what poor countries at the lowest rungs of economic development need is not a multi-party democracy, but in fact a decisive benevolent dictator to push through reforms required to get the economy moving.”<sup>290</sup>

Although both sides of the argument regarding the status of Rwanda’s political culture are backed by valid facts, the following arguments from Elizabeth Powley and Timothy Longman present the most realistic portrait of the RPF and what its characteristics have meant for women.

Elizabeth Powley recognizes the RPF controls 73 percent of the openly contested seats in the Chamber of Deputies and although political parties do not contest women’s seats, the majority of women who gain the seats are in fact ‘sympathetic’ to the RPF.<sup>291</sup> In a recent survey of nations, Freedom House ranked Rwanda as “not free” due to serious concern over political rights and civil liberties within the country. Thus, Powley argues Rwandan women owe their ability to participate in democratic institutions to a political party that is not fully democratic,

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<sup>289</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>290</sup> Moyo, Dambisa. “Dead Aid. Why Aid is Not Working and How there is a Better Way for Africa.” Farrar, Straus and Giroux. New York. (2009): 42.

<sup>291</sup> Powley, Elizabeth. “Rwanda: Women Hold Up Half the Parliament.” *Women in Parliament: Beyond Numbers*. (2004): 154-163. Web. 15 Dec. 2012.

making it impossible for women to ever be fully independent of the state.<sup>292</sup> Generally speaking, Powley believes authoritarian governments can easily use gender quotas to redirect civil society's attention away from the absence of a representative government. However, she also points out the RPF was a Tutsi-led group when it took over Rwanda in 1994, but is not exclusive to the one ethnicity. In fact it has made it illegal for citizens to associate as either Hutu or Tutsi, (instead everyone is Rwandan). Powley argues that since currently 85 percent of the country is Hutu, decentralization and the inclusion of women at all levels of political administration will and has already begun the inclusion of the majority population.<sup>293</sup>

Similar to Powley, due to the 'authoritarian nature' of the Rwandan state, Timothy Longman believes "parliament cannot serve as a forum for real debate but instead, a tool for legitimizing government policies by giving them a popular veneer."<sup>294</sup> However, Longman also believes women's participation in parliament still has meaning and significance, because Rwandan women MPs have indeed been very active in moving forward legislation that serves the interests of other Rwandan women. Overall, Longman concludes,

"The nature of representation is quite limited in a highly authoritarian state... ..freedom of speech, assembly, and press are just as relevant for women as they are for men, and the restrictions of these rights seriously undermines the meaning of women's representation."<sup>295</sup>

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<sup>292</sup> Powley, Elizabeth, 2003. *Op.cit.*

<sup>293</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>294</sup> Longman, Timothy, 2005. *Op.cit.*

<sup>295</sup> *Ibid.*

Based on the evidence, Rwanda is most definitely not a fully democratic state but as Longman emphasizes, women MPs have still been able to put forth legislation that has indeed enhanced gender equality. However, moving forward, women MPs will only be able to go so far if restrictions to freedom of speech, media, and opposition parties continue.

## **2. Urban Development: What About the Rural Population?**

John Mutamba, Gender Specialist at UNIFEM Rwanda, who formerly served on Rwanda's Ministry of Gender and Family Promotion, believes women MPs have been extremely influential in mainstreaming gender in legislation and has noticed an increase in women's civil society involvement. Through his involvement in development projects with UNIFEM, Mutamba has also noticed women MPs have been actively involved in a number of rural development projects throughout Rwanda, which he says is very positive. However, Mutamba points out there is no way to show that women MPs are representing *all* Rwandan women equally and effectively because there is no monitoring system in place to reflect representation. From what Mutamba has observed, MPs do not meet with rural groups and representatives as often as they should. However, he emphasizes that MPs, and in particular women MPs have consistently been present at important events in rural communities, and while in attendance have done an outstanding job at mobilizing, promoting and encouraging local women to participate and engage.<sup>296</sup>

While reviewing the mechanisms that have been put in place to enforce and promote the gender-focused legislation, it became clear a significant majority of

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<sup>296</sup> Stacey, Justine. John Mutamba, UNIFEM Gender Specialist. (Interview) Kigali, Rwanda. May 2010.

programs and resources are based in Rwanda's capital city of Kigali. The Gender Desk and One Stop Centre are located in Kigali, along with half of the National Women's Council's Polyclinics of Hope (clinics for women who are victims of GBV).<sup>297</sup> The fact that in 2009, only 10 percent of Rwandan women had documented ownership over land titles is an example of how some of the RPF's gender-focused policies and programs are not reaching rural communities and if they are, they are either lacking promotion or access to resources for women to be aware and able to access their rights for example, to formal land titles. The majority of women living in rural areas of Rwanda have yet to benefit from women's increased representation and involvement in politics. Almost 59 percent of Rwandan women are employed as dependent family workers, which means they are likely to have very little control over the products of their labour.<sup>298</sup> Men have increasingly been moving out of agricultural work, while women have been moving more towards paid agricultural employment. While in urban areas the workforce is dominated equally by women and men, in rural areas, women represent over 60 percent of the adult working population.<sup>299</sup>

While traveling through Rwanda, it quickly becomes obvious there is a discrepancy in funding allocation and infrastructure between Kigali and the rest of the country. Kigali is a beautiful, well developed, modern city, but as soon as one is past its outskirts, there are no longer streetlights, electricity, or formal housing, and

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<sup>297</sup> Rwanda Women's Network. *Activity Report 2008-2009*. (May 2010) Print. Kigali, Rwanda.

<sup>298</sup> Abbott, Pamela and John Rwigahira. "Millennium Development Goals Rwanda Country Report 2010." United Nations Development Programme. (2010) Web. 15 Dec. 2012.

<sup>299</sup> *Ibid.*



resources such as police stations and hospitals are few and far between. Furthermore, the main headquarters for a significant number of women's-based organizations are also located in Kigali. With 82 percent of Rwanda's population living in rural areas, these factors are a serious concern.

In terms of improving the scenario of engaging rural communities, and specifically rural women, Mutamba believes the Forum of Rwanda Women Parliamentarians (FFRP) has made some positive progress with which they must continue to move forward. Mutamba recognizes through the FFRP, women MPs have been successful in organizing and inviting women from rural areas to attend plenary sessions in parliament. However, there has not been a continual strong, organized women's movement coming from all rural areas of Rwanda. Mutamba believes the FFRP needs to work more regularly with rural women to ensure their consistent inclusion and participation.<sup>300</sup> Likewise, the GMO recognizes women MPs have done extremely well when visiting the villages and communities they represent to find out what the grassroots women's issues are, this is just something that must be done more often. Because of women's visible empowerment in parliament, an increasing number of grassroots women are becoming connected with those who have the power to make change. The GMO's Deputy Chief Gender Monitor Cyrille Turatsenze points out many Rwandan women MPs come from "regular positions" in society such as primary school teachers and members of women's-based organizations. (Not all women MPs came from elite or well-off families.) Because the majority of women MPs had careers that required significant engagement within their communities,

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<sup>300</sup> Stacey, Justine. John Mutamba, UNIFEM Gender Specialist. (Interview) Kigali, Rwanda. May 2010.

they are good at communicating with those in the communities they represent in parliament and as a result, provide “home grown solutions”.<sup>301</sup>

Although we have seen some positive growth from the RPF’s gender-focused policies in areas of healthcare, education, and involvement in leadership and decision-making, an area of development that remains very concerning for Rwandan women is their formal recognition and participation in the economic sector. Although women MPs have been active in updating laws that should enhance women’s economic empowerment, (Land Succession, Maternity leave, etc.) the fact that poverty is ‘feminized’ in Rwanda has meant progress towards economic gender equality has been very slow.

### **3. Feminized Poverty**

The ‘feminization’ of poverty refers to the statistical fact that women represent a disproportionate percentage of Rwanda’s poor population. Permanent Secretary of Rwanda’s Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning Pichette Kampeta Sayinzoga believes one of the best ways Rwanda can attack gender inequality is to attack poverty, since those most affected by poverty are women.<sup>302</sup> Although the percentage of Rwandans living in poverty has decreased from 57 percent in 2006 to 45 percent in 2011, 62 percent of female-headed households remain in poverty.<sup>303</sup> Sayinzoga believes Rwanda has tackled and improved a significant number of things

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<sup>301</sup> Stacey, Justine. Cyrille Turatsenze, Gender Monitoring Office Deputy Chief Gender Monitor. (Interview) May, 2010. Kigali, Rwanda.

<sup>302</sup> Kampeta Sayinzoga, Pichette. (May 2010) [Field notes collected on-site during “International Forum on the Role of Leadership in Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment” [Conference in Kigali, Rwanda] Unpublished raw data.

<sup>303</sup> Rwanda. Minister in the Prime Minister’s Office in charge of Family and Gender Promotion. *Single Report Equal to Fourth, Fifth and Sixth Reports on the Implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women*. Kigali, July 2007. Print.

since 1994, but is not at all on track for tackling poverty throughout the country. For example, agriculture is a core pillar of economic development and poverty reduction—subsistence farming has moved to cash farming of which activities, women only represent 25 percent.<sup>304</sup> Furthermore, in rural areas, most households are dependent on wood stoves, for which girls fetch firewood in forests and are often raped and/or attacked.

As we have seen, the monetary and economic aspect of poverty is unequally distributed amongst rural women and men in Rwanda. However, as Amartya Sen recognizes, unequal monetary income and economic participation only represents half of the poverty issue. The other half can be understood by what Sen refers to as a “capacity approach”. This approach measures the well-being of individuals by assessing their freedom to live a life that allows them to fulfill their capacities. Sen believes it is necessary to consider the resources and opportunities that are needed in order for inclusion in both the labour market and social process to be enhanced.<sup>305</sup> In Chapter Two, Rwandan women’s social poverty was reviewed, and it became clear that historically, women have been under-valued and treated unfairly because of cultural stereotypes and social traditions. In recent years, this trend has become less prominent as the political empowerment of women has increased. However, this feminized poverty it is not a problem that simply disappeared when women became increasingly politically active. John Mutamba at UNIFEM Rwanda

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<sup>304</sup> Rwanda. Ministry of Gender and Family Promotion. *Strategic Plan for the Implementation of the National Gender Policy*. June, 2009. Web. 15 Dec. 2012.

<sup>305</sup> Godoy, Lorena and Sonia Montano. “Understanding Poverty from a Gender Perspective.” *Women and Development Unit of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, United Nations*. Santiago, Chile. (June 2004): 1-39. Web. 15 Dec. 2012.

has noticed an overall increase in gender equality awareness, including increased confidence in women in civil society, better social programs focusing on health, hygiene, education, and social protection, and an overall new perception of women as powerful leaders. Mutamba attributes these changes largely to an increased number of women in formal politics but it is important to recognize prejudice and historically patriarchal views do not just go away because there is a new law or policy.<sup>306</sup> It will take a significant amount of time before engrained gender stereotypes and cultural beliefs significantly fade away, especially in rural areas where there is less access to communication and media. Mutamba and several women MPs are aware of this issue but are also hopeful that with the increases in access to education and awareness that have taken place for girls and boys alike, societal and cultural gender stereotypes will continue to fade.

As with any new improvements, there are also new challenges and issues that will arise. With the inclusion of more women in politics and the workforce, Rwandan women are increasingly experiencing a double-burden of childcare and domestic duties, while also having to maintain professional and/or agricultural work.<sup>307</sup> The majority of women MPs site this issue as one that is significant to them and many other working women with whom they work and communicate. As women MPs continue to make moves toward changing ideologies and empowering women in the workforce, they will also need to consider this issue, and create and implement

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<sup>306</sup> Stacey, Justine. John Mutamba, UNIFEM Gender Specialist. (Interview) Kigali, Rwanda. May, 2010.

<sup>307</sup> Abbott, Pamela and John Rwihahira, 2010. *Op.cit.*

programs that enable women to participate without experiencing the double-burden.

#### **4. “Brain Drain” for Women’s Organizations**

Jennie Burnet raises an important issue of having so many women now involved at higher levels of government in Rwanda, in that grassroots women’s organizations are experiencing a “brain drain” of their strongest, most vocal leaders. Burnet recognizes that many of the “most vibrant, motivated leaders” of women’s civil society, non-government organizations have moved up to formal positions of leadership within government. In one sense, this is great news as is clear in the resulting legislation, reflecting women MPs’ ability to make changes and include ideals of empowerment and equality in many new laws and policies. However, from the perspective of women’s-based organizations, this shift has been somewhat detrimental in that many strong, educated, experienced women leaders are no longer running these organizations.<sup>308</sup> Burnet recognizes with the decrease of experienced, motivated women leaders in civil society organizations and an increase in women in parliament, Rwanda may see an increasing disconnect between women in office and women in society. This would create a significant dent in the rate of progress that has been made in working towards women’s empowerment and gender equality. As we have seen, the reason why women parliamentarians have been successful in pushing gender-focused policies and laws is not only due to the fact that their representative numbers increased, but also because they are backed

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<sup>308</sup> Burnet, Jennie E. “Gender Balance and the Meanings of Women in Governance in Post-Genocide Rwanda.” *African Affairs*. 107. (28 May 2008): 361-386. Web. 15 Dec. 2012.

by a historically strong women's movement (which itself is backed by a very large number of women's grassroots organizations). Although all of the women's-based organization representatives that were interviewed for the purposes of this study (including representatives from *Pro-Femmes*, Action Aid, and the Agaseke project) said they felt communication with women MPs had remained consistently strong, Burnet's point is significant in that if strong women leaders continue to move into government positions, women's organizations stand a chance at getting left behind.

However, Josephine Uwamariya (Action Aid Rwanda Country Director) recognizes, strong women's organization leaders moving into government positions could also have the opposite effect in that women MPs will be more likely to communicate with a women's organization, especially if they had previously invested time and leadership into it. Uwamariya gives a personal example, pointing out the Speaker of Rwanda's parliament Rose Mukantabana previously worked for Action Aid Rwanda and has maintained very close ties and communication with the organization, consistently referring to its leadership for input on gender-focused policy-making within government.<sup>309</sup>

Understanding these problems and their resulting implications for the empowerment of women and gender equality as a whole is an important step in moving forward for Rwanda. Although some significant progress has been made in legislation, policy, projects, and implementation, Rwanda still has a long way to go in

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<sup>309</sup> Stacey, Justine. Josephine Uwamariya, ActionAid Rwanda Country Director. (Interview) Kigali, Rwanda. May, 2010.

terms of achieving gender equality, especially at the grassroots level in its most rural areas.

### **Conclusion: What Does this Mean for Development?**

Ultimately, this study has demonstrated Rwanda's Parliamentary gender quota and resulting increased number of women MPs has indeed been a factor in the number and effectiveness of women-focused laws and policies since 2003, when the quota was enacted. We cannot assume all Rwandan women MPs have pushed for the increased number of women-focused laws, policies, and implementation mechanisms. However, with the majority of women MPs' previous leadership and professional experiences in prominent women's-based development organizations and councils, we can attribute Rwanda's growing numbers of women-focused legislation to these women's growing numbers in Parliament.

After delving into the implementation mechanisms and programs put forth by Rwanda's Parliament for these women-focused laws, we saw a number of positive developments occur throughout the country. These included girls' increased access to and enrollment in education, increased spending on healthcare resulting in decreased infant and maternal mortality rates, increased reporting and openness of GBV incidences, improved gender mainstreaming and monitoring techniques, easier business loan and microfinance access for women, gender equal land rights, and labour laws formalizing maternity leave and gender-equal wages.

However, we also saw that some areas covered by these women-focused laws were still severely lacking. For example, girls' enrollment rates in post-secondary

education still remains low, as does women's representation in the formal workforce, as well as women's rates of formal land registration. Furthermore, Gender Focal Point representatives in rural community sectors remain inefficient and untrained in many instances, and the National Institute of Statistics Rwanda as well as the Gender Monitoring Office are missing significant information, in particular regarding statistics indicating incidences of GBV in several rural areas, and regarding women's land and small business registration.

As Rwanda has recently achieved gender parity in primary education enrollment and is increasing the number of FAWE girls' schools, we will hopefully continue to see secondary and post-secondary enrollment increase. The recent increase in women graduates from KIST in 2011 is encouraging, and shows women-focused policies and programs are beginning to have an impact on gender parity in Rwanda's education system.

However, the rest of the development areas in which we should be seeing some improvement according to the women-focused laws and their implementation mechanisms all seem to have one thing in common. A lot of development initiatives and resources on the urban core of Kigali that many rural areas remain struggling and underdeveloped. A lack of resource allocation and development in Rwanda's rural areas has further entrenched feminized poverty". If Rwanda's Parliament and in particular its women MPs want to see changes and empowerment continue to grow for women, they will need to do more to build infrastructure, resources, and access to knowledge in Rwanda's most rural communities. Otherwise, these women-focused laws and policies will not reach those who can benefit from them the most.



Although proud of Rwanda's accomplishments thus far, in 2010, President Paul Kagame stated "equality and empowerment are given their true meaning when leaders take policy beyond the usual rhetoric and takes them to villages and people",<sup>310</sup> showing he too is hopefully beginning to recognize the need for increased rural policies, programming, and spending (and not simply paying it lip service).

Overall, Rwanda's government has significant progress to be made in its efforts to achieve gender equality and must focus more attention on its majority, rural population. It is important to note several of the newer legislation such as the law on GBV are new and may simply require more time for real progress and improvements to occur. Regardless, Rwanda's gender-equal Parliament has made a significant amount of progress in terms of creating and effectively implementing women-focused laws and policies that have already shown several positive results. At this point it was necessary for us to consider why Rwanda's increased women MPs have experienced such success in promoting women's rights, and if the quota and their increase in numbers was the only factor involved.

We know that the quota was a factor in women's increased presence in Parliament, because it was properly enforced by the government in its 2003 election. Although the results of the 2003 election provided the required 30 percent of women Senators in Parliament, Rwandans elected an additional 15 women to the Chamber of Deputies, resulting in a 48 percent female representation. As Timothy

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<sup>310</sup> Kagame, Paul. (May 2010) [Field notes collected during the "International Forum on the Role of Leadership in Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment" conference in Kigali, Rwanda] Unpublished raw data.

Longman recognized, there must have been factors other than the quota that empowered women (who pre-genocide enjoyed few rights to land, education, and economic benefits due to a patriarchal value system) to run for and win political representation.

What we went on to discover was there were other factors that contributed to women's increased representation and to their power and willingness to bring about change in law and policy that would in turn empower other women and enhance gender equality. Although it was a number of factors combined that affected women MPs' success including the willingness of the RPF, the fact that the gender quota is entrenched in Rwanda's Constitution, and the aftermath of the genocide, it became apparent the driving force behind these empowered women MPs was in fact themselves.

Rwanda's history of a strong women's movement dates back to before the genocide. Although small and informal prior to 1994, women's groups survived the genocide, and brought together women of all ethnicities as Rwanda's new leaders. By the end of the 1990s, women's-based development groups were recognized as the strongest, most active sector of Rwandan society. Women's ability to lobby the government was clear as laws such as the one on Inheritance were changed to include women's right to land ownership in 1999, prior to the Parliamentary gender quota. During this period, women MPs were few, but crossed party lines in the FFRP caucus to work together and with the strong grassroots women's movement to eventually lobby Kagame and the RPF to establish a minimum requirement of women leaders at all levels of decision-making. Since the 2003 election and adoption

of the gender quota, women MPs have shown their leadership abilities and willingness to push the women's agenda in plenary sessions and on their committees, and this is presumed to be due to the fact that the majority of women MPs had previously been presidents and leaders of various women's-based development groups and councils that had developed from the strong pre-genocide women's movement.

It quickly became clear Rwanda's strong women's movement in civil society was the driving force behind the enactment of the quota and the level of empowerment women MPs have experienced thus far. If we refer back to Jo Rowlands' definition of 'empowerment', we see because of Rwanda's enforced Parliamentary gender quota, women have the 'power to act' as representatives in decision-making bodies. However, more importantly, these women MPs also have 'power from within' due to their history of participating in a vibrant grassroots women's movement, and fighting their own way from the bottom to the top.

This of course, is where the important lesson for development lies. Parliamentary gender quotas are a fairly new phenomenon and are becoming a common trend worldwide. With this case study of Rwanda, governments adopting quotas, and underrepresented groups pushing for them may be able to better understand that establishing a quota alone does not necessarily guarantee enhanced gender-mainstreaming in resulting policy or practice. As we have learned from the case of Rwanda, it was a combination of factors unique to the country that resulted in increased women Parliamentarians, and women-focused legislation. The quota is indeed part of what helped women achieve their formally recognized positions in

Parliament. However, it is the strong grassroots women's movement and women's own experiences as leaders and survivors that has enabled Rwandan women MPs to advocate for policies and programs that will in turn, empower other women. Thus, we resort to the age-old adage that true, sustainable development must always emanate from the bottom-up.

## Appendix

### **1. Open-Ended Interview Outline with Women's-Based Organizations in Rwanda**

What is your role within your organization?

What would you say is the current 'women's agenda' (or goals of the women's movement) in Rwanda? What are the current goals of your organization?

Why is the empowerment of women and gender equality so important, especially within Rwanda?

Have you seen improvements in the empowerment of women in civil society and gender equality since 2003 (when the Parliamentary gender quota was enacted and more women entered Parliament)? Do you have specific examples?

What sort of relationship does your organization have with women MPs? With male MPs?

Have women MPs been active in promoting the goals of your organization? Do you communicate with them on a regular basis?

Do you think that the women MPs have effectively pushed the women's agenda in Parliament and laws since 2003?

Do you think the gender quota law and increase of women in Parliament has altered circumstances for women in civil society? Has more women in formal positions of leadership changed the mindset of citizens?

Have the goals or programs of your organization changed as a result of (possible) changes in women's empowerment (since 2003)?

What are the challenges you face within your organization? What challenges do you think Rwandan women face on a day-to-day basis?

Do you think there are any negative effects of the gender quota and the increased of women in formal political leadership roles?

Have you noticed any changes in the mindset of men? How do they seem to feel about the affirmative action for increasing leadership amongst women?

Overall, do you think the gender quota and the increase of women in Parliament has been positive for women in civil society and gender equality as a whole?

## **2. Open-Ended Interview Questions for Women MPs**

Describe your position in Parliament- what are the roles that accompany this position? Do you sit on any committees?

How long have you been an MP?

How did you become an MP? What were you doing previously that led to the position you have now?

I understand, to fulfill the gender quota, 30% of seats in Parliament are allocated to women only. But women currently represent 56% of Parliament. Did you run in a constituency with men and women? Or in one with just women?

The number of women in Parliament has gone beyond what the quota requires, why do you think this is?

Do you think there are any disadvantages to the Parliamentary gender quota law?

What are your primary concerns and goals within Parliament?

How important is it to address women's issues within Parliament?

What would you say are current women's issues that need to be discussed?

Do you feel that other MPs (both women and men) seem to care about women's issues?

Are gender/women's issues addressed regularly within Parliament?

Relative to your fellow MPs, would you say you have a large say within discussions and decision-making (in your committee? in Plenary Sessions?)

What bills/laws have been passed since 2003 that focus on gender equality or empower women in some way? Were you involved in the formulation of this/these bill(s)?

Have you seen a difference in women's rights and gender equality throughout Rwanda since 2003, when the quota was enacted and more women became active in Parliament?

### **3: Rwanda’s Constitutionally Entrenched Parliamentary Gender Quota**

“The State of Rwanda commits itself to conform to the following fundamental principles and to promote and enforce the respect thereof:

Building a state governed by the rule of law, a pluralistic democratic government, equality of all Rwandans and between women and men reflected by ensuring that women are granted at least thirty per cent of posts in decision making organs.”<sup>311</sup>

### **4: Rwanda’s Constitutionally Entrenched Gender Monitoring Office**

*Special Commissions and Organs*

*Chapter IX: The Gender Monitoring Office*

*Article 185:* “A Gender Monitoring Office is hereby established. The Gender Monitoring Office shall be an independent public institutions whose responsibilities include the following:

1. to monitor and supervise on a permanent basis compliance with gender indicators of the programme for ensuring gender equality and complementarity in the context of the vision of sustainable development and to serve as a reference point on matters relating to gender equality and non-discrimination for equal opportunity and fairness;
2. to submit to various organs recommendations relating to the program for the promoting of gender equality and complementarity for national development.”

“The gender monitoring office shall submit each year its program and activity report to the Cabinet and submit copies thereof to other State organs determined by law. The law shall determine its functions, organizations and operation.”<sup>312</sup>

### **5. Rwanda’s Constitutionally Entrenched National Women’s Council**

*National Councils*

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<sup>311</sup> Rwanda. Rwanda Constitution. Chpt 2: Fundamental Principles. Art. 9, Title 4. June 2010.

<sup>312</sup> Rwanda. Rwanda Constitution. Chapt 3: Special Organs. Art. 185. June 2010.

*Chapter IV: National Council of Women*

*Article 187:* “There is hereby established a National Council of Women. The law shall determine its organization, functions, operation and its relations with other state organs.”<sup>313</sup>

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<sup>313</sup> Rwanda. Rwanda Constitution. Chpt. 5: National Councils. Art. 187. June 2010.



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