

In formal employment women participation is constrained by illiteracy. The majority of Rwanda's uneducated are rural women. Information from the surveyed literature and the interviews suggest that some women do not want to access loans which could improve their livelihoods because of illiteracy.

Cultural stereotypes and traditions have tended to work against women in relation to their accessing loans and participating in poverty alleviation. Some of the interviewed women revealed that in some sections of Rwandan society it is a taboo for a woman to borrow money for small-scale business ventures. Rwandese men also continue to have cultural prejudices against women participation in those activities, which traditionally were meant for men.

5.3 The legal, policy and institutional environment

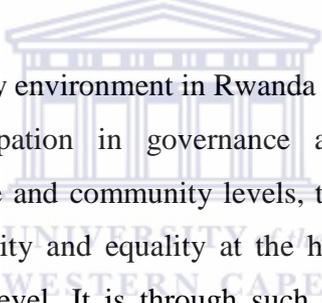
Overall it can be said that the legal, policy and institutional environment in post-genocide Rwanda is supportive of women participation in poverty alleviation. The government has gone a long way to enact legal and policy provisions, which can be described as gender and poverty alleviation friendly. The National Gender Policy and the Poverty Reduction Strategy can both be described as supportive of women poverty alleviation efforts. There is support for poverty alleviation from institutional organisations the most remarkable being PROFEMMES, which coordinates the efforts of most the NGOs involved in women development projects. The multi-sectoral approach to poverty reduction, in which almost all government ministries are play defined roles in the fight against poverty, appears to be an effective poverty fighting strategy.

The government policy of decentralisation encourages women participation in governance and political decision-making. It allows women to make decisions over issues affecting their lives in social and economic spheres. The decentralisation policy empowers women at the cellule and community levels as it enables them to take charge of their poverty problems.

While it has been said that, overall, the legal, policy and institutional environment in post genocide Rwanda is generally supportive of women participation in poverty alleviation, it needs to be acknowledged as the study has shown, that much of this support remains for most purposes theoretical. In practice as some of the women's evaluative voices reveal, there is chasm between policy intentions and goals and the realised outcomes. There appears to be numerous problems associated with effective policy implementation. These problems range from illiteracy, inadequate infrastructure and material resources to corruption and poor communication between government policy implementers and the grass roots.

5.4 Recommendations

This study makes the following recommendations:

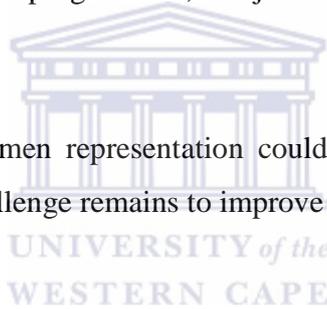
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- (i) While the legal and policy environment in Rwanda is generally supportive of women participation in governance and political decision-making, especially at cellule and community levels, there is need for legislation that ensures gender equity and equality at the highest level of governance, for example, Cabinet level. It is through such empowerment that women can effectively contribute to making the decisions that can critically transform the rural woman.
 - (ii) Many of Rwanda's poverty problems could be solved if the literacy level among the poor, especially women, is raised. It has been said that education per se is both liberating and empowering. The fight against poverty in Rwanda requires that an environment that allows women to fully participate in education and training, especially in Higher Education, be created. Such an effort will have budgetary consequences. In this author's opinion there is need for government to invest more in education.

- (iii) There is need for government to ensure that policy implementation is properly monitored and evaluated so as to ensure that enshrined goals and aspirations are achieved.
- (iv) A stronger focus on improving the lives of rural women in the provision of clean water to eliminate the waterborne diseases they faced.

5.5 Conclusion

Rwanda is slowly recovering from the 1994 genocide and is making progress in the areas of gender mainstreaming at legislative level and has the highest percentage of women representative in the government. The orientation of its gender and poverty alleviation policies, which are based on an understanding of traditional culture, provides valuable lessons for women development programmes, not just in Africa but also throughout the developing world.

The achievements made in women representation could be a model for other African countries. However, the real challenge remains to improve the lives of rural women.



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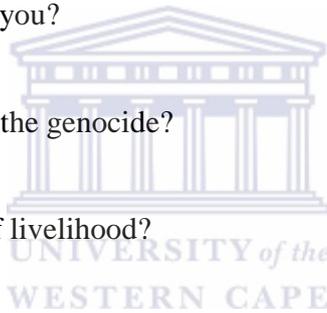
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APENDIX A

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW GUIDE

1. How did the genocide affect you?
2. Has your life improved after the genocide?
3. What is your major source of livelihood?
4. Do you think the government is doing enough to help women fight against poverty?
5. What do you see as the major difficulties facing women in Rwanda today? What could be done to alleviate these problems?
6. Are you happy with the level of women representation in governance?
7. What do you think women of Rwanda should do to reduce poverty?
8. In which areas of economic activity do you see women as having great opportunities?
9. What can you say about the laws that have been passed to support women?



10. Do you think the NGOs in Rwanda are doing enough to support women?
11. Can you comment on women's participation in local government?
12. What do you think have been the major achievements of Rwandese women since 1994?
13. In what ways do you think the lives of women in Rwanda could be improved?



APPENDIX B

List of participants and date and place of interview

NAMES	DATE OF INTERVIEW Day/month/year	PLACE
Joyce	06/12/2005	Butare
Kanyange	29/11/2005	Kigali
Kanyiginya	05/12/2005	Butare
Mugabekazi	1/12/2005	Kigali
Mukagaga	11/01/2006	Kigali
Mukanyange	07/12/2005	Kabuga
Mukarushema	27/01/2006	Kigali
Mukunde	06/01/2006	Kigali
Mwiza	09/01/2006	Kigali
Ndirima	03/01/2006	Kigali