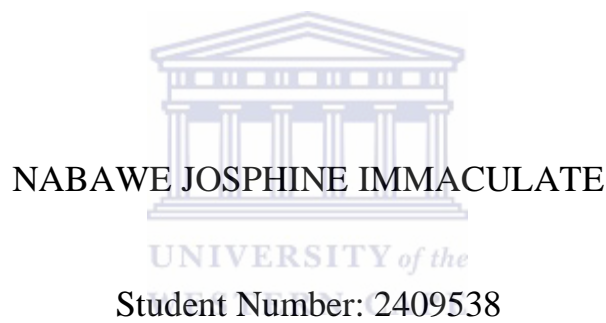




University of the Western Cape



A mini-thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the
degree of Masters of Arts in Development Studies AT the Institute of Social
Development
University of the Western Cape

SUPERVISOR: Dr M. Isaacs

April 2006

Declaration

I declare that: “The role of women in poverty alleviation: The case of Rwanda after 1994 Genocide” is my own work, and has not been submitted for any degree or examination in any other university, and that all the sources I have used or quoted are indicated and acknowledged by references.

Signature: _____

Nabawe Josephine Immaculate



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Immaculate J. Nebawe

Abstract

This study examines the role of women in poverty alleviation in post-genocide Rwanda. It further looks at their contributions in the decision-making process and their participation socio-economic development. The research assesses and evaluates the significance of the participation of women in initiatives to alleviate poverty .A key research issue is examining the constraints and opportunities for women's participation in poverty alleviation. Of special interest is how the policy, institutional and legal environment in post-genocide Rwanda has impacted on women participation in the fight against poverty. The study also examines the contributions of selected women's projects to poverty alleviation in Rwanda as illustrative exemplars from which lessons on gender equity and human development in Africa can be drawn. At the centre of the examination is women participation in agriculture, which is the cornerstone of their livelihood and Rwanda's economy. This research is mainly a desktop study based on extensive search of relevant literature on the policy making process during the post-genocide era. To complement the literature this study interviewed women in national, provincial, district and local level in Rwanda to ascertain their key constraints and opportunities and their role in poverty alleviation. Interviews were also conducted with women participating in development projects. The study findings of this research reflect the achievements of Rwandan government in representation of women at National level.

Key words: Community, Gender, Poverty, Poverty prevention, Poverty reduction, Post-genocide, Rural development, and Vulnerability.

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Chapter one

Introduction to the Study

1.0 Introduction

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) report of 2004 ranks Rwanda amongst the twenty poorest countries in the world (UNDP, 2004). Its Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita income of US \$ 294 (2004 figures) is well below Africa's average GDP per capita income of about US \$ 550, making it one of Africa's poorest. More than sixty percent of the people live below the poverty datum line of US \$2 per day. The majority of these people are women (Powley, 2003).

Kabeer (1995) has noted that women are always amongst the poorest of the poor and the elimination of social, cultural, political and economic barriers is an essential prerequisite in their participation in poverty alleviation. The Beijing Conference on Human Rights and Sustainable Development (1995) noted that it was impossible to talk about human rights without making reference to women rights. It is difficult to eliminate poverty without addressing the issue of women rights. Women are an indispensable part of the process of socio- economic development.

It is now generally accepted that in developing countries women play critical roles in the fight against poverty (United Nations Development Programme Report, 2000). Writing on the role of women in poverty alleviation in post-genocide Rwanda, Powley (2003) has noted that the role that women have had to play in politics and governance, post genocide reconciliation and development was an inevitable consequence of the population demography. Immediately after the genocide there were more women (70 percent) than men in Rwanda (Powley, 2003). It was in recognition of this reality that Rwanda's post-genocide Government of National Unity, committed itself to fight against poverty, promoting national reconciliation, decentralization of the process of governance, promote gender mainstreaming and put into place a national gender policy that aimed to support

genocide widows and other vulnerable groups and increase women participation in decision-making and democratic governance (Powley, 2003; Jones, 2004).

Rwanda came through a post-genocide era where there was general entrenchment of poverty (Jones, 2004). The economy was in a critical state and most of the people had nothing. Their lives were in shambles. There were large numbers of orphans, widows and emotionally and physically handicapped people and a host of many other poverty-related problems. Ever since the return of peace, the country has put into place various processes and mechanisms to alleviate poverty, combat disease and address infrastructural needs. As Rwanda and other African countries fight poverty, it is important to clearly understand the roles and efforts women are playing in poverty alleviation. Such an understanding is critical and enlightening in the crafting of legislative, institutional and other frameworks that might help women fight poverty.

This study attempts to understand the role and effort women have played in alleviating poverty in Rwanda in the post-genocide era. It also assesses their contributions to the decision-making process. The key research issue is around the constraints and opportunities for women's participation in poverty alleviation. Of special interest is how the policy, institutional and legal environment in post-genocide Rwanda has impacted on women participation in the fight against poverty. The study assesses the contributions of selected women's projects to poverty alleviation. At the center of the examination is women participation in agriculture, which is the cornerstone of their livelihood.

1.1 Rwanda and the post genocide era

1.1.1 About Rwanda

Rwanda, is a small, land locked poor rural country (size/area = 26 338 square kilometres; population = 8 440 820) in Equatorial Africa. It shares borders with: Uganda, to the Northeast, and Tanzania to the East and the Democratic Republic of Congo to the West. Ninety percent of the people of Rwanda depend on small-scale subsistence agriculture.

Coffee and tea are the primary foreign currency earners (Government of Rwanda Poverty Reduction Paper, 2002).

As is the case in many other African societies, Rwandan society is characterized by a patriarchal social structure that underlies the unequal social power relations between men and women, boys and girls (Powley, 2003). These are translated in male dominance and women's subordination. Historically men have played a dominant role in the Rwandan society. This dominance has manifested itself through, for example, unequal value and privileges accorded to children of different sexes. However, some positive tendencies existed within Rwandan culture that reinforced women's significant social roles and ensured their autonomy. For example, women played powerful roles in the management of household's resources and participated in decision-making at different levels. In traditional Rwandan society, women's roles were proportionally valued and considered to be complementary and indispensable to men's. Women, including widows had entitlements to land (Powley, 2003).

Europeans first visited Rwanda in 1854. In 1890, Rwanda became part of German East Africa. During the First World War Rwanda was occupied by Belgium. In 1919 it was made a Belgian League of Nations mandate, along with Burundi, under the name of Rwanda-Urundi. Rwanda got independence in 1962 (Jones, 2004; Powley, 2003). There are two major ethnic groups in Rwanda; the majority Hutus (85 %) and the minority Tutsis (15 %). Hutus and Tutsis speak the same language. Belgian colonialists deliberately encouraged ethnic division and hatred between the Hutus and the Tutsis. It has been suggested that the genocide of 1994 has part of its roots in Belgian colonial policy (Powley, 2003).

1.1.2 The Genocide

The 1994 genocide resulted in the decimation of almost one million people. An estimated 937 000 Tutsis and moderate Hutus were massacred (mainly women and children), in one hundred days, in a genocide described by Jones (2004) as one of the most intensive and horrific in human history. The genocide has been described as having been "gendecidal" in several ways (Jones, 2004; Powley, 2003). One of these ways was that women not only

became victims of the slaughter, but some also actively participated in violence and manslaughter. During the genocide women lost husbands, children, relatives, and communities. Most of them witnessed horrific cruelty and lost material possessions and the means of survival. They also subjected to rape and torture. There was destruction of property and untold misery and suffering for the majority of the people (Jones, 2004; Powley, 2003).

1.1.3 The post genocide era

Writing on Rwandese women in the post genocide era, El-Bushra (2000, p.7) says:

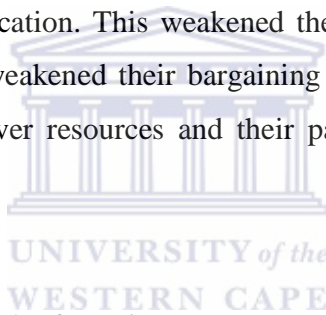
In the areas most affected by the massacres...for example in Bugasera in eastern Rwanda...the proportion of women who have been widowed, raped or physically handicapped is very high. It is to a large extent these women on whom the responsibility...for producing food is now falling. Their psychological as well as their physical status is therefore a major issue for the community's survival in the current stage (El-Bushra in Jacobs et al., 2000, p. 73).

Women have had to face the hardships mentioned by El-Bushra (2000) against a background where the economy is still in a very bad condition, with not much hope for a quick recovery (Prunier, 1995). After the genocide there were very few roads, bridges and telephones. Additionally, there was a shortage of schools, teaching and learning materials and teachers -many of whom had died in the genocide. The level of illiteracy was very high (currently illiteracy is at 56%). In the immediate aftermath of the genocide, women and girls constituted 70 percent of the population (Powley, 2003, p. 3). Today, 54 percent of Rwanda's adult population are women. Fifty six percent of the illiterates are women.

While the return to peace has witnessed concerted efforts by the people, under the leadership of President Paul Kagame, to get out of the misery caused by the genocide, Rwanda remains poor with unique problems for women. One of these problems is the HIV/AIDS epidemic. Women are affected most by the epidemic. The 1994 genocide left many women traumatized, humiliated, and a large number living with HIV/AIDS from genocide era rape cases (Jones, 2004; Powley, 2003). Gough (2000) succinctly captures some of the HIV/AIDS related problems faced by Rwandese women:

The spread of Aids and of *kwinjira* [sharing of husbands] are also fuelled by poverty. With an annual income of 180 dollars (£110) per person, Rwanda is ranked by the World Bank as the world's third poorest country. Seventy per cent of all households fall below the poverty line. "If a woman has land and maybe some money then she can attract the services of young men," said Jerome Ndabagariya of CARE. "He does some work for her in the field and then some more work in the bedroom." A more affluent woman will give a man some food, maybe some beer or, in rare cases, money. In return he may well give her the Aids virus. (Gough, David (2000), "Husband-hiring hastens the spread of Aids in Rwanda", The Guardian UK, February 8, 2000).

Such unprecedented distortions in social relations have exacerbated gender imbalances and inequalities. In short, years of colonialism, the influence of urbanisation and the 1994 genocide have cumulatively brought about cultural distortions and imbalances, which in many ways cannot be said to be favourable to Rwandese women. Colonialism brought about a shift from subsistence to a monetary economy, which is based on paid employment and a formal education. This weakened the position of women relative to that of men. In particular, it weakened their bargaining position on matters concerning their access to, and control over resources and their participation in the development process.



1.3 Statement of the problem

In the context of this research, the focus is on women's participation and contribution to poverty alleviation in Rwanda at the community and legislative level. Of special interest is the extent to which government policies on poverty alleviation and gender are supportive of the needs of rural women in Rwanda.

The study is guided by the following questions:

1. What roles have Rwandese women played in the fight against poverty since 1994?
2. What have been constraints and opportunities for women in poverty alleviation in post-genocide Rwanda?
3. To what extent has the policy, legal and institutional environment in post-genocide Rwanda been supportive of rural women participation in poverty alleviation?

1.4 Women, poverty and poverty alleviation in post-genocide Rwanda

Soon after the genocide, women assumed a variety of roles. Because many men had either died or been displaced by the genocide, many women, some as young as twelve years, found themselves assuming the role of household head (Powley, 2003). They had to provide finances, look for food, built shelters and look after orphans left by the genocide. According to the statistics released by the Rwanda Ministry of Gender and Family Promotion (2005) 31.8 percent of households in urban areas and 35.8 percent of households in rural areas are headed by women. Among the women who head households are the disabled (3.7 percent of the female population) and widows (13.9 percent of the female population (Rwanda Ministry of Gender and Family Promotion, 2005).

The Government of Rwanda Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (2002, p. 15) identifies the characteristics of the three major poor households in Rwanda. These households are categorized as:

- *umutindi nyakuja*: the very poor: -beg for survival, have inadequate food and shelter, and are malnourished and disease stricken.
- *umutindi*: the poor: -the main difference between the *umutindi* and the *umutindi nyakujya* is that this group is physically capable of working on land or very small land holdings. It has no livestock.
- *umukene wifashije*: the resourceful poor: -this group shares many of the characteristics of the *umutindi* but, they have small ruminants and their children go to primary school.

Women head many of these households. This issue is further discussed in Chapter three.

1.4.1 Women participation in productive activities

Other than being household heads Rwandese women have played and continue to play important roles in agriculture -mainly subsistence agriculture, decision-making at community level, national leadership, education and health, government of local municipalities, reconstruction and national reconciliation. Through their participation at household, community and national levels, Rwandese women have made positive contributions to sustainable development and poverty alleviation (Kimanuka, 2002; Rwanda Country Progress Report, 2002; Powley, 2003; Ministry of Gender and Family Promotion, 2005).

Participation in productive activities is a way of empowerment and reducing vulnerability, marginalisation and poverty (Béné, 2003, 2004; Overholt et al., 1991). Eighty seven percent of productively active Rwandese depends on agriculture and/or fishery for livelihood. The majority of the people depending on agriculture for survival live in the rural areas (90 percent men and 97 percent women).

Only a small proportion of Rwandese women are employed in senior civil service positions (Powley, 2003; Kimanuka, 2002). There are more women than men among crafts workers and service personnel traders. Overall, although some effort has been made to reduce gender disparities and improve gender equity in productive activities, inequities between men and women still exist. While this is so, it is heartening to note that Rwanda has made considerable progress in promoting gender and empowering women since 1994 (Powley, 2003; Kimanuka, 2002). For example, today, Rwanda has the highest proportion of female parliamentarians in the world (48 percent). This is in line with achievement of the country's Millennium Development Goals (MDG's) (Ministry of Gender and Family Promotion Report, 2005), which seek, among other things, to eliminate poverty and extreme hunger through such strategies as promoting gender and empowering women.

1. 4.2 Women participation at the community level

One of the strategies used to fight poverty and promote development by the transitional, post genocide government in Rwanda was to have communities organize themselves and

mobilise available resources in order to solve problems and participate in the delivery of goods and services, which are of value to the community (Powley, 2003; Ministry of Gender and Family Promotion Report, 2005). In this effort households were organized into cellules, which became working units for development and poverty alleviation. In these communities people would provide free labour (*umuganda*) for such activities as constructing public roads and bridges, cultivation and harvesting in communal fields and building schools. According to the Government of Rwanda Poverty Reduction Paper (2002) the idea of cellules is a utilization of the traditional concept of *ubuhede mu kurwanya ubukene*, which is about communal action in the fields and households coming together to fight poverty. The idea of public work, *umuganda*, is a tradition with deep roots in Rwandan culture and history. It is witnessed that women are at the core of all these activities and It is partly because of the contribution of women that Rwanda witnessed a gradual decrease in the percentage of people living below the poverty line between 1994 and 2000 (Government of Rwanda Poverty Reduction Paper, 2002).

1.5 Conceptual framework

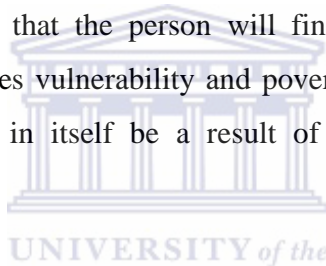
In this study the concepts gender, poverty, poverty alleviation, poverty reduction, poverty prevention, vulnerability and food security are defined and used as described in the following sections. These concepts form part of the poverty and poverty alleviation conceptual matrix. The study's conceptual framework recognizes that these factors are intricately interrelated and interwoven. Part of the effort of this thesis is to demonstrate how these factors interplay in defining Rwandese women's participation in the fight against poverty. At the centre of this conceptual framework is the view that poverty alleviation is all about reducing the vulnerability of poor Rwandese women. The conceptual framework on poverty and poverty alleviation is guided by Béné's (2003, 2004) work. This framework is further explained in Chapter two.

1.5.1 Poverty, poverty alleviation, food security and vulnerability

Poverty has been defined in different ways by different authors. For example, the United Nations Development Programme (1998) has described poverty as a multidimensional phenomenon that consists of different characteristics including income, demography,

health and educational variables as well as cultural and social conditions found at community and household level. Maxwell (1999) describes poverty in terms of income and consumption, lack of capacity, vulnerability, un-sustainability, lack of basic needs and relative deprivation. In the context of this study poverty is taken to mean economic exclusion, social marginalisation, class exploitation and political disempowerment (Béné, 2003, 2004). This understanding of poverty recognizes that somebody who is poor suffers from lack of basic human needs (food, shelter, etc.), has an insecure livelihood, is vulnerable, finds it difficult to sustain himself/herself and is generally at risk to exploitation by the rich and powerful, and is vulnerable to disease, natural disasters and conflicts.

According to Chambers (1989) **vulnerability** refers to a person's exposure to contingencies and stress such that the person will find it difficult to cope with the exposure. Béné (2004) describes vulnerability and poverty as intricately interlinked but different. Vulnerability may in itself be a result of poverty. It is associated with economic insecurity.



Closely related to poverty and vulnerability is the issue of **food security**. Food security means people have physical and economic access to adequate, hygienic, healthy and nutritious food at all times (Lipton, 2001; Food and Agricultural Organisation of the United Nations, 1999). Lipton views food security as meaning more than just the availability of food nationally or globally but the extent to which the individual person in any community has physical and economic access to food.

Poverty alleviation is a term that is often used synonymously or interchangeably with the terms, *poverty reduction* and *poverty prevention*. According to Béné (2004) although these terms have an intricate interrelationship they have different meanings. *Poverty reduction* refers to the material well being of people becoming better over time as a result of their participation in economic activities and generation of wealth. The role of the economic activity in helping people to 'maintain a minimum standard of living' such that they don't fall into destitution is referred to as *poverty prevention*. Béné sees poverty

alleviation as a much broader concept that encompasses both poverty reduction and poverty prevention. *Poverty alleviation* therefore is a deliberate effort to reduce and prevent poverty through capital accumulation, and wealth generation, which can lead to economic growth and the material well being of people. This effort entails poverty impact mitigation and the reduction of vulnerability.

1.5.2 Gender and development

Over the past three decades, the concept of **gender** has evolved from equating gender with sex to the now more or less generally acceptable socio-cultural perspectives (Rwanda Ministry of Gender and Women Development, 2001; Lewis & Ostner, 1994). Gender differences differ from sex or biological differences in that they are socially determined and may vary, according to local circumstances, within a region and between religions. Socio-cultural perspectives refer to gender as the set of socially constructed identities, attributes, roles and responsibilities assigned to men or women in social, economic, political, religious, etc. activities (Lewis & Ostner, 1994; Hobson & Lewis, 2004; Powley, 2003). This conception of gender recognises that the responsibilities, functions, roles, as well as patterns of behavior expected of men and women will vary according to time, culture and society. In other words conceptions of gender have cultural idiosyncrasies. The roles, rights, duties, obligations and prerogatives assigned to men and women in any given society are also functions of the levels of technological and socio-economic development.

Writing on gender, planning and development Moser (1993) makes a distinction between the terms *women* and *gender*. According to her, the term 'women' is problematic because it places emphasis on the sexual or biological difference between men and women. The concept of gender however is about the *social relationship between men and women, in which women have been systematically subordinated* (Moser, 1993, p. 3). She goes on to make a distinction between Women in Development (WID) and Gender and Development (GAD). The concept of WID focuses on women in isolation and places emphasis on productively incorporating women into the development process through promoting women access to credit facilities and employment. To the contrary, GAD focuses on women, not in isolation but in relation to men and places emphasis on *gender*

relationships when crafting strategies for fighting against poverty. Moser (1993) recommends that when planning the development process planners should produce policies that deliberately aim to empower women and achieve equality and equity between men and women in society.

1.6 The Methodology

This research is mainly a desktop study based on extensive search of relevant literature on poverty alleviation efforts and the policy making process during the post-genocide era. Writing on documentary research Scott (1990) asserts that the use of documents as a source of research information is just as legitimate a methodology as using interviews, observations and questionnaires. He further suggests that in social science research, documentary information can be used to describe, analyse and evaluate phenomena. To complement the literature this study interviewed women holding positions at national, provincial, district and local levels in Rwanda to ascertain women's roles in poverty alleviation. In addition, this study looked into the key constraints and opportunities in the fight against poverty. Women participating in development projects in rural communities in were also interviewed. The interviews sought to assess how the new policies on gender and poverty reduction impacted on the women.

1.6.1 Data collection: Documentary evidence sources

Documentary research is about using texts, government publications, newspapers, certificates, census publications, paintings, personal photographs, diaries etc. as sources of research information (Scott, 1990; Borg, Gall & Borg 1996).

The major sources of available information turned out to be Rwandan government's publications on legislations, gender and poverty alleviation strategies; Non Governmental Organisations (NGOs) reports on gender and poverty alleviation e.g. World Bank, UNDP, DFID; and published government reports and statistics on meeting the millennium goals. Other sources include popular publications such as magazines and newspaper articles. Some of the critical documents and reports used in compiling information are:

- Rwanda Ministry of Gender and Family Promotion, Report, 2005;
- Government of Rwanda Poverty Reduction Paper, 2002;
- African rights (progress towards women taking lead report 2004);
- National review on the science and technology from a gender perspective paper 2002;and
- Country progress report on implementation of women's world regional and national action platforms report 1999.

1.6.2 Data analysis framework

According to Scott (1990) once the social scientist has gathered documentary evidence, decisions have to be made about how that information or data is going to be analysed, interpreted and reported. In the current study the information was gathered with the objective of describing, explaining and evaluating the nature of phenomena -the role of women in poverty alleviation; constraints and opportunities and the policy and institutional environment in relation to poverty alleviation. The aim was to extract information that would help the researcher answer the research questions. Some form of documentary analysis was undertaken (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2000; Gal et al., 1996; Rist, 1994). A descriptive and evaluative approach was chosen for presenting the collected information.

According to Williamson et al. (1982) a methodological approach is descriptive when it seeks to gather detailed information about, what things are and how and why they are or come to be? This study is mainly a descriptive account of the participation, contributions and activities of women in poverty alleviation in post-genocide Rwanda. In short the descriptive element attends to questions of what, how, when, where and why? This is in relation to the role of women in poverty alleviation in Rwanda. Evaluation is an activity involving: collecting, analysing, interpreting and communicating information (Rossi et al., 2003) about the role of women in poverty alleviation in post-genocide Rwanda. The current study examines the constraints women face, the opportunities they have and the extent to which the policy, legal and institutional environment have been supportive of women participation in socio-economic development, sustainability and poverty

alleviation. This process entails analysing, assessing and judging the quality, value and worthiness of women participation in poverty alleviation at national, provincial, district and local level.

The approach to answering research questions one and two was descriptive and evaluative.

To tackle question three of the study, a documentary analysis framework developed by Rist (1994) was used as a guideline. Rist (1994) uses the framework to analyse three components of a policy cycle (goals, policy content, policy implementation). Description and evaluation of the policy, legal and institutional environment in post-genocide Rwanda was done with the aim of determining the following:

- The extent to which the past and current policy, legal and institutional environment is supportive of women participation in socio-economic development, sustainability and poverty alleviation.
- The extent to which gender related policy has incorporated the needs and issues facing rural women.
- To what extent have poverty alleviation programs targeted rural communities?

It is important to reiterate that the main emphasis of this study is on the review of related literature and documents, and the interviews conducted are used to complement the literature.

1.6.3 Interviews

In order to complement the documentary evidence ten women were interviewed. The interviews were conducted in Rwanda. All interviews were held in *Kinyarwanda*. The semi-structured interviews were designed to elicit the women's perceptions, feelings and ideas about the role of women in poverty alleviation, the constraints and opportunities faced by women in the fight against poverty and the nature of the legal, constitutional and

policy environment in post genocide Rwanda. A sample of the semi-structured interview guide appears in the appendix (Appendix A).

Interviewees were purposefully chosen to represent the cross-section of women participating in poverty alleviation in post-genocide Rwanda. The choice of respondents was also done to accommodate governmental and nongovernmental organizations playing roles in poverty alleviation. This includes women participating in poverty alleviation projects in rural communities. Four women, two each from Dufatanye project and Dutere Imbere were interviewed to represent women participating in projects. Dufatanye and Dutere Imbere are women's poverty alleviation projects specializing in providing employment and small-scale businesses respectively. Four women, who held senior positions in their organizations, were chosen to participate in the study representing women in powerful positions in Rwandans society. The women were: the Council District Chairperson (Butare); Profemme Twese Hamwe (President); Ministry of Gender and Women Development (Secretary); and Women in Investment; (Project Coordinator). Two women, one rural and one urban who were ordinary members of society were also interviewed. A full list of the interviewed women and dates for the interviews is given in Appendix B.

For each interview, the researcher started by introducing herself and assuring respondents about the confidentiality of the collected information. Each interview was then asked a set of questions designed to capture information around the three major research questions in the thesis.

Probing was done when necessary to get better understanding of the responses. For the women involved in women's projects, questions were also asked so as to get an understanding of the project, how it was running, and the level of support the women were getting. On the average each interview took forty-five minutes. All interviews were tape-recorded, translated into English (by the researcher) and transcribed verbatim into word. Results from the interviews are presented in the form of the women's own voices. In reporting, all the women who participated in the study are, for ethical reasons, given pseudonyms.

1.7 Significance of the study

This study brings together the concepts of gender and poverty alleviation in one of the poorest countries in Africa and measures the achievements made in gender policy and the social arena. An understanding of how the policy, legal and institutional environment in post-genocide Rwanda has impacted upon the lives of rural women can be valuable to African countries as it can inform the enactment and development of policies and their implementation.

It is hoped that this study will contribute to the understanding of the role Rwandese women have played in policy formulation and poverty alleviation. The study will add to the existing knowledge on the role of women in poverty alleviation in Rwanda.

1.8 Limitations of the study

The study was limited by the availability of time. Because of this limitation it was not possible to interview as many women as had been originally planned. Financial constraints also limited the scope of coverage or the country as it was proved too costly to travel to all the corners of Rwanda. The result was that only women in mainly urban centers and easily accessible rural areas could be interviewed.

1.9 Thesis chapter outline

Chapter one introduces the study. The chapter gives the background to the study, defines the research problem and lays out working definitions of some of the key concepts in the study. It also presents the methodology.

Chapter two elaborates the major concepts in the study. The concepts gender, poverty, poverty alleviation, food security and vulnerability are explored and expanded through reviewing relevant literature. In addition the poverty alleviation framework and the impoverishment process as described by Béné (2003, 2004) is presented.

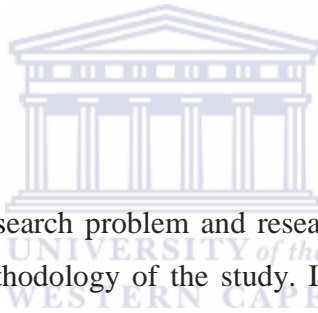
Chapter three focuses on answering research questions one and two of the study. The first part of the Chapter discusses the role of women in poverty alleviation in post-genocide Rwanda. The second part describes and evaluates the constraints and opportunities for women at community level in post-genocide Rwanda. Data from the interviews is presented.

Chapter four uses an adaptation of Béné's (2004) poverty alleviation framework and Rist's (1994) methodological framework to evaluate to what extent the legal framework on poverty alleviation in Rwanda supports the needs and concerns of rural women. Evidence from both documentary analysis and interviews with women is presented.

Chapter five summarizes the key issues raised in the study, make recommendations and draws conclusions.

1.9 Conclusion

This chapter introduced the research problem and research questions and presented the theoretical framework and methodology of the study. In addition, the significance and limitations of the study were also highlighted. The next chapter discusses the study's conceptual framework.



Chapter two

Conceptual Framework

2.0 Introduction

In this chapter the *major concepts* used in this study are discussed. Within this effort the discussion takes aboard such concepts as economic exclusion, class exploitation, social marginalisation, and political disempowerment. These concepts are both associated with and intricately related to the *major concepts*. They form part of the poverty and poverty alleviation conceptual matrix as described by Béné's (2003, 2004). The first section looks at gender and gender mainstreaming. This is followed by considerations of gender and culture in Africa, and poverty and gender. After this the *major concepts* are discussed. These concepts are: gender; gender mainstreaming; poverty; poverty alleviation; poverty reduction; poverty prevention; food security and vulnerability.

2.1 Conceptual Framework

2.1.1 Gender, gender mainstreaming and development

In chapter one gender was defined as the set of socially constructed identities, attributes, roles and responsibilities assigned to men or women (Lewis & Ostner, 1994; Hobson & Lewis, 2004; Powley, 2003). This is the conception of gender adopted in this study. According to the OECD (2001) gender, poverty and the environment are mutually reinforcing, complementary and crosscutting facets of sustainable development. Mainstreaming gender is key to reducing poverty across its various dimensions and important in mitigating the environmental factors influencing gender relations as well as poverty outcomes. The UNDP defines gender mainstreaming as the development of policies, programmes, administrative and financial activities that take into account the concerns and interests of both men and women. It is about gender equity and equality in planning and implementing development plans (Moser, 1993). This contributes to both social-economic development and poverty alleviation. Gender equality and environmental sustainability are internationally recognized development goals. *Gender*

inequality concerns all dimensions of poverty because poverty is not gender-neutral (Kabeer, 1996, 1997, 2003; Walter, 1996).

2.1.2 Gender and culture in Africa

In many African cultures deep-rooted prejudices and discrimination against women exist (Imam et al., 1987). Processes causing poverty affect men and women in different ways and degrees. Female poverty is more prevalent and typically more severe than male poverty. Women and girls in poor households get less than their fair share of private consumption and public services. Women suffer violence by men on a large scale. They are more likely to be illiterate and suffer from political and social exclusion in their communities. Compared to men, women have less access to assets that provide security and opportunity. Such constraints on women's productive potential reduce household income and economic growth. Gender inequality is therefore a major cause of female poverty.

According to van Niekerk (2000) understandings of what gender is depend on the culture. While he accepts that, as in ancient Roman societies, traditional African societies were patriarchal, the conception of gender in traditional African societies is markedly different from that portrayed by Western scholars. In "African culture patriarchy and patrilineality" (van Niekerk, 2000, p. 375) did not necessarily mean that women were inferior members of the society as many western scholars portray. There are many examples where women wielded political power and occupied such positions as chiefs and headmen. The perceptions of women and their roles in society are governed by cultural worldviews and ideologies. In African societies the role of women was also supported by religious belief systems. For example it was considered a taboo for a man to abuse his mother. Traditional African societies emphasized collectively and harmony among men and women. This however is not to deny the existence of inequalities and inequities among men and women in African societies. In pre-colonial Rwandan society women did not have entitlement to land but had rights ownership of such immovable assets as domestic animals and household goods. Women could not inherit land.

2.1.3 Poverty and gender

Poverty affects men and women differently due to socially constructed gender roles and gender power relations (Ostergrad, 2002; Nguyen & Stovel, 2004; Kabeer, 1996, 1997). These often take the form of male dominance and female subordination, making women more vulnerable to poverty. Women are the poorest of the poor; and eliminating social, cultural, political and economic discrimination against women is a prerequisite to eradicating poverty in the context of sustainable development. In many countries, policies and strategies for poverty eradication have not been based on a clear understanding of gender dimensions of poverty. Most of these policies fail to improve the lives of women and their families. This is largely because they fail to recognize the importance of women in democratic decision-making and development. According to Kabeer (2003) poverty reduction efforts will be unsuccessful unless government policy makers take cognisance of issues relating to women participation in development. This is supported by the Oxfam Gender Policy (1990, 1999), which states that unless gender related inequalities are addressed, it might not be possible to achieve sustainable development and poverty alleviation. Kabeer (2003) calls upon women to organize themselves and put pressure on governments to address their needs and interests when developing policies.

2.2 What is Poverty?

Figure 2.1 below, summarizes those concepts associated with poverty and poverty alleviation. These concepts are mainly derived from the contribution of Béné's (2003, 2004).

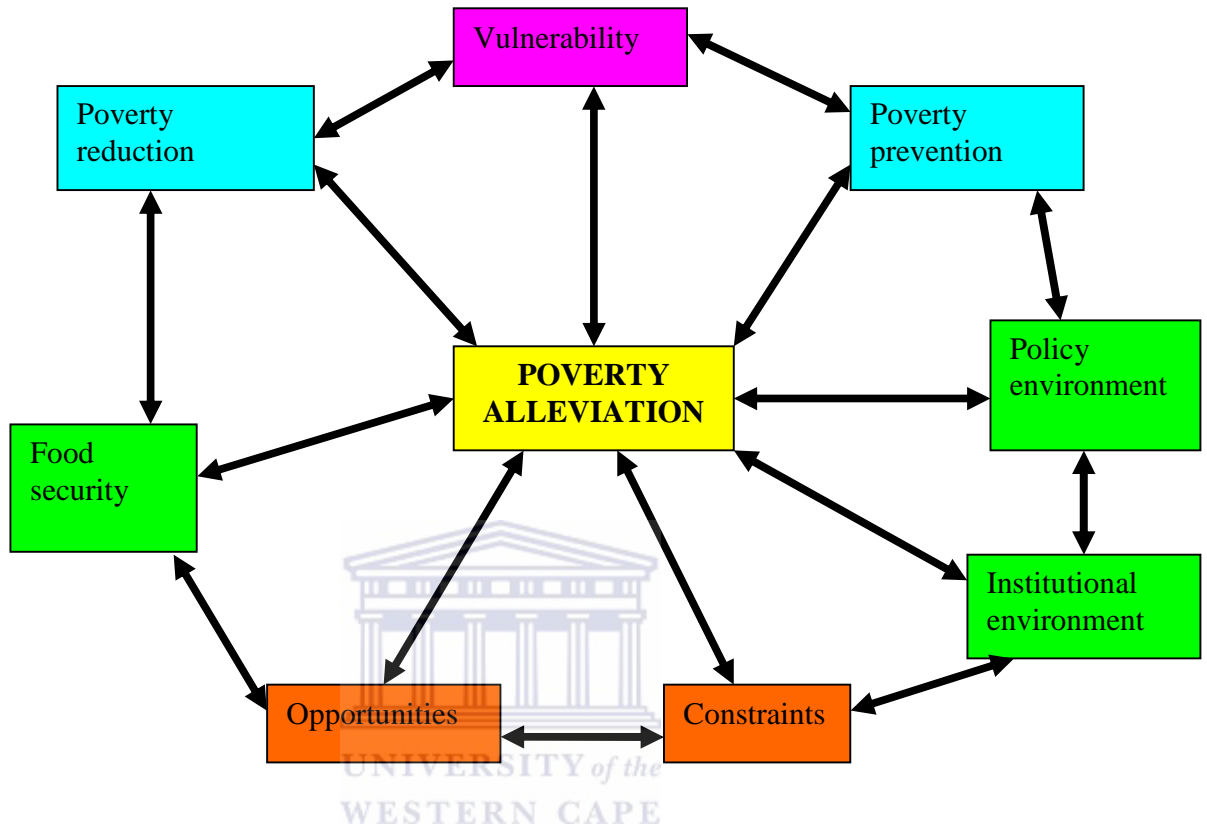


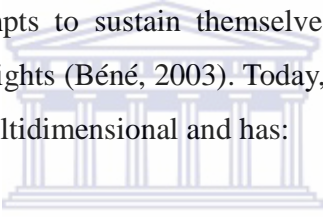
Figure 2.1: A summary of the poverty alleviation conceptual framework as adapted from Béné's (2004).

2.2.1 Poverty defined

According to Béné (2003, p. 957), over the past one hundred years, there has been a gradual shift from the “concept of income-poverty” to a consensus on the “multidimensional nature of poverty”. Up to about the mid 1960s, the most predominant way of describing poverty was to equate poverty with low income. This conception of poverty holds that an individual’s inability to meet basic food needs is a fundamental indicator of poverty. It came to be realized that poverty was not just as simple as having a low income or failing to meet basic food requirements but also included a general lack of basic human material needs. This led to the “basic needs model” of poverty developed by

the International Labour Organization (ILO) and United Nations Research Institute of Development (UNRISD) in the 1970s (Béné, 2003). Basic human needs include education, health, clean water, shelter, and other life sustaining materials.

Béné (2003) reports that a drastic re-conceptualization of poverty appeared in the 1980s with the work of Sen (1981) who introduced the idea that poverty is more than the availability of resources, but is also about whether people have rights of access or 'entitlement' to the resources. This idea was to eventually lead to the linkage of poverty with such concepts as socio-political power; exclusion and decision making -poor people do not have rights to resources and are marginalized because they lack socio-political power. By the mid 1980s there was an increasing consensus that poverty was gender related (Agarwal, 1985). Other than gender, poverty has also been associated with constraining individuals' attempts to sustain themselves, exclusion and the denial of social, political and economic rights (Béné, 2003). Today, the consensual view of poverty appears to be that poverty is multidimensional and has:



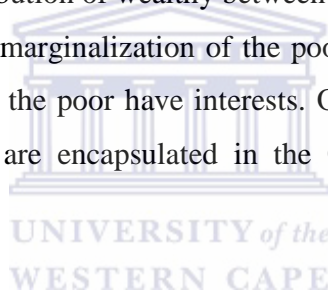
...Various manifestations, including lack of income and productive resources sufficient to ensure sustainable livelihoods; and hunger and malnutrition; ill health; limited or lack of access to education and other basic services; increased morbidity and mortality from illness; homelessness and inadequate housing; unsafe environments; and social discrimination and exclusion. It is also characterized by lack of participation in decision-making [political] and in civil, social and cultural life...(United Nations (Ed.) Report of the World Summit for Social Development, In Copenhagen, April 1995, p. 41).

Béné's (2003) conception of poverty is much broader than the UN Report's (1995) and lists additional manifestations of poverty. The additional manifestations include social and physical isolation, vulnerability, low self-concept, gender discrimination, and lack of empowerment. This conceptualization concurs with a description of poverty by the OECD (2001), which looks at poverty for either gender as deprivation and incapacitation in five key dimensions. These dimensions are: (1) economic capabilities –lack of income, food, material assets and physical resources; (2) human capability- based on health, education, nutrition, clean water and shelter; (3) political capability- includes women rights and political freedom; (4) social cultural capability – cultural integrity and being

valued in society; and (5) social capability – ability to withstand economic and other external pressures, which is linked to poverty alleviation.

2.2.2 Poverty dynamics

Writing on poverty in small-scale fishing communities, Béné (2003) identifies four distinguishable but interrelated processes of impoverishment. These processes limit or constrain poor peoples' command over resources. The processes in question are economic exclusion, social marginalization, class exploitation, and political disempowerment. Poor people are discriminated and excluded from some economic activities because of financial incapacity. Social marginalisation is about barring or denying a particular group of people command or access to resources, services or commodities on the basis of such social criteria as gender. Class exploitation is taken in Marxist sense of unequal distribution of wealthy between the low and high class. Political disempowerment refers to the marginalization of the poor in decision-making processes concerning resources in which the poor have interests. On close analysis Béné's (2003) processes of impoverishment are encapsulated in the OECD's (2001) dimensions of poverty.



2.3 What is poverty alleviation?

In its *World Rural Poverty Report* of 1992, the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) describes poverty alleviation as both a mechanism of assisting poor people getting income and a way of increasing their productivity and integration into the mainstream of the economy (IFAD, 1992). To Munkner (1996) poverty alleviation is about helping the poor get access to resources and using them effectively. Bilqees & Mahmood (1994) allude to poverty alleviation as a programme of promoting the redistribution of income and resources with specific bias towards women. Demery & Addison (1987) view poverty alleviation as dealing with increasing or improving poor people's access to productive assets, employment, education, health and such resources as food.

The descriptions of poverty alleviation in the preceding paragraph share a commonality. They all look at poverty alleviation as a way of lifting people out of poverty rather than preventing people from falling into poverty. Lifting people out of poverty through capital accumulation and wealth generation has been described as poverty reduction (Béné, 2004). Poverty reduction is a term that has been conflated and or used synonymously with poverty prevention and poverty alleviation (Béné, 2004).

Mafeje (2000) noted that the term poverty alleviation was born out of disillusionment with the economic development theories of the 1960s. This term has also been used interchangeably with poverty elimination and poverty eradication. The theories, premised that economic growth at national level would culminated in the improvement of the standard of living of all people. This was a fallacy because while national economies were registering growth, extreme poverty was increasing amongst sections of the population. It was against this background that the agenda, development goal, and buzzword; “poverty alleviation” appeared in the 1970s. It came to be articulated by such international agencies as ILO, WFP and IFAD.

Béné (2004) is of the view that it is important to clearly distinguishes and define the terms poverty alleviation, poverty reduction and poverty prevention. He argues that, this is for purposes of both avoiding confusion and giving direction to policy formulation. Figure 2.2 below summarizes Béné’s (2004, p. 15) elucidation of the concepts.

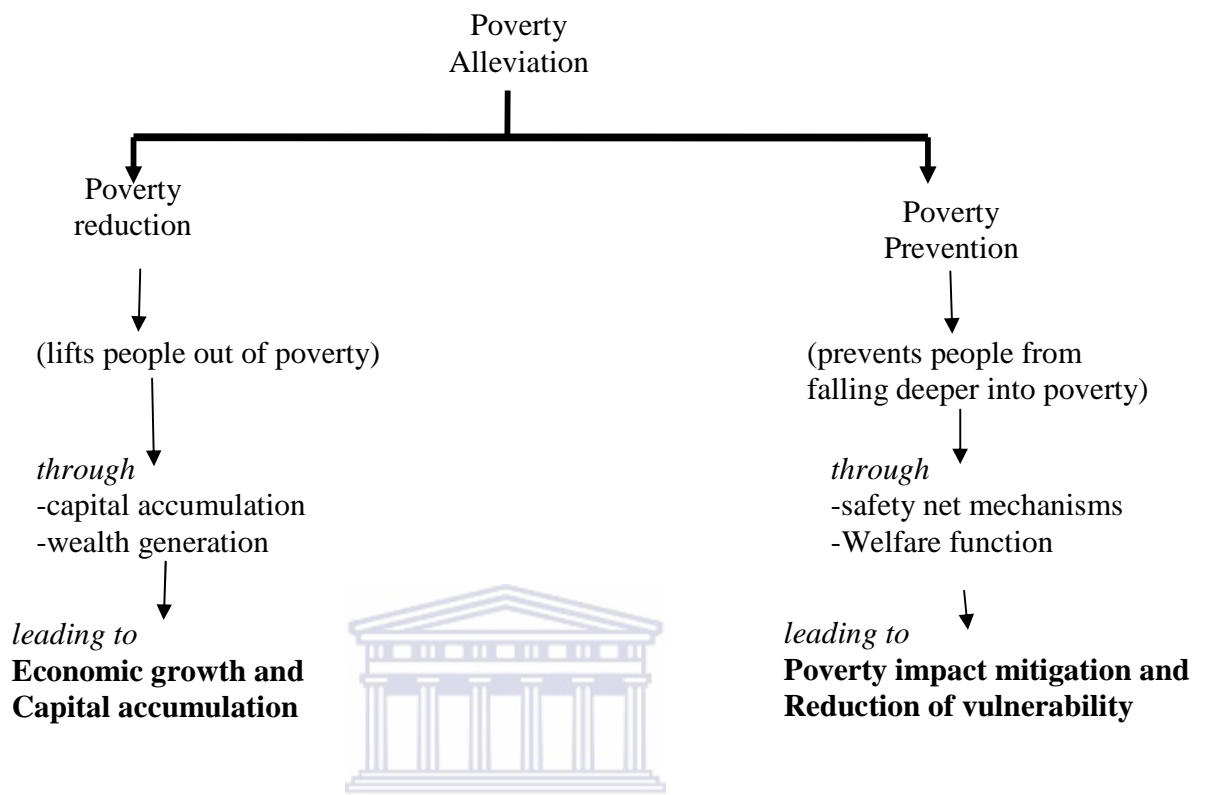


Figure 2.2: Béné's two dimensions of poverty alleviation

According to Béné (2004) poverty prevention is about preventing poor people from getting poorer even if they are already living below the poverty line. In contrast poverty reduction is about gradually increasing poor people's levels of income, such that the number of people living below the poverty line decreases. This is called reducing "income poverty". Béné (2004) admits that this conception of poverty reduction locates poverty alleviation within the old-fashioned 'economic-centered' approach to understanding poverty. This view or paradigm does not recognize the importance of such social-political factors as gender and institutional capacity in the total understanding of the meaning of poverty. Whereas poverty prevention is about mitigating the impact of poverty and reducing vulnerability poverty reduction is about economic growth and capital accumulation. The concept of vulnerability will be explored shortly.

Poverty alleviation embodies both poverty prevention and poverty reduction. Poverty prevention and poverty reduction play complementary roles in the alleviation of poverty. Béné (2004, pp. 16-18) proposes “strategies” (he calls them mechanisms) for both poverty reduction and poverty prevention in small-scale rural fishery communities. In other words he proposes strategies for poverty alleviation. He suggests that poverty reduction can be accomplished through: gender sensitive wealth generation at a household level; rural development at community level and economic growth at national level.

For poor rural households where access to employment is limited, Béné (2004) recommends a poverty prevention strategy in which households can mitigate the effects of long-term poverty (chronic poverty) through accessing those resources, which are commonly shared by the community (welfare mechanism). Vulnerable households can mitigate the effects of short-term poverty through looking for alternative or additional sources of income (safety-net function). Examples of alternative or additional sources of income include food for work programmes and small-scale fisheries.



2.4 Food Security

Naturally, food security is linked to poverty. Poor people are the ones who perpetually suffer from lack of food, hunger, malnutrition, and other dietary deficiency conditions and diseases. According to the World Food Summit (1996) food insecurity exists whenever people, physical and/or economically, fail to access adequate amounts of safe food so as to meet the requirements of a balanced diet, satisfy their food preferences and lead healthy lives. In similar vein, Reutlinger (1999) refers to food insecurity as the inaccessibility of enough food at all times. There is food insecurity whenever there is hunger and looming starvation (FAO, 1999). Food insecurity depends on a variety of factors, which are political, social, economic, national, environmental, global, etc. (Béné, 2004; Scanlan, 2004; Lipton, 2001; Tweeten, 1997).

The dimensions of food security have been examined from different perspectives (Béné, 2004; Tweeten, 1997; Uvin 1994). Béné (2004) describes five different levels of food

security; individual, household, community, national and global. A nation, a community or a household can be described having food self-sufficiency. This means it will be producing or acquiring enough food to cover requirements. However, food security at global, national, community or even household level does not necessarily entail or guarantee food security at the level of the individual. This can result from the individual's lack of entitlement or right of access to food. Lack of entitlement to food is associated with such factors as gender, ethnicity and social status. This can lead to what Scanlan (2004) refers to as 'food poverty'.

According to Scanlan (2004) food poverty can be a direct consequence of such factors as inadequate income, failure to access resources, poor food distribution mechanisms and lack of other food entitlements. As has been noted in previous sections, these are the same factors, which give poverty a gender character. Food insecurity therefore, is gender related. It has been noted that women, especially in sub-Saharan Africa, are affected most by food insecurity (Scanlan, 2004; UNDP, 2003). In most cases it is women who have to look for food for children and work in the fields to produce food. Sadly, in terms of food insecurity women and children are the most vulnerable. They have to bear the brunt of food shortages, poverty and deprivation.

2.5 Vulnerability

It is now generally accepted that vulnerability is part and parcel of poverty (Bene, 2004; Coudoeul et al., 2002; Bankoff et al., 2004; Kamanou & Morduch, 2002). However, there appears to be no consensus as to what vulnerability is and how it can be measured. Writing on poverty at the household level, Komanau & Marduchi (2002) describe vulnerability as exposure to risk and being defenceless against deprivation. Likewise Coudoeul et al. (2002) view vulnerability as the possibility of falling deeper into poverty at the household level. They go on to note that vulnerability influences household behaviour and coping strategies, which have bearings on poverty alleviation policies. In this view vulnerability can simply be defined as the "probability or risk today of being in poverty or falling into poverty in the future" Coudoeul et al., 2002, p. 28).

According to Béné (2004, p. 14) vulnerability is both a part of and consequence of poverty. Poor people are more vulnerable to poverty because they lack access to resources, health, education, employment, etc. Béné (2004) goes on to suggest that vulnerability is relative and some people are more vulnerable than others depending on the nature of their livelihoods and a host of many other factors. This is in concordance with the view of vulnerability held by Bankoff et al. (2004). They acknowledge that whether or not somebody is going to be at risk to hazards, disasters, and indeed poverty depends on environmental (biological), social factors or cultural etc. To these factors can be added the political environment as well as the policy and institutional environment in which the individuals affected by poverty live.

If it is accepted that vulnerability is indeed intricately related to and inseparable from poverty and that poverty is a gender character, then it must also be accepted that vulnerability has a gender face. Whitehead (2003) asserts that women are much more vulnerable to chronic poverty because of gender inequalities. This is especially true for Sub-Saharan Africa where there are unprecedented gender inequalities and biases in the distribution of income, command over resources, access to labour markets and access to health and education (Kikula et al., 2005; Young, 1995).

2.6 Conclusion

This chapter set out to review some of the key concepts associated with poverty and poverty alleviation. It became apparent that in addition to a gender character, poverty has many faces and dimensions. Poverty is fostered by factors and forces, which are social, economic, political, cultural, religious and even ideological. The fight against poverty, which includes poverty prevention and poverty reduction, is about helping the poor overcome the effects of those forces and factors, which tend to entrench poverty. At the same time this fight necessitates the full exploitation of those positive aspects produced by the same factors and forces. Ensuring food security and reducing vulnerability appear to be the most critical components of poverty alleviation.

In the next chapter, the first two research questions posed in this thesis are attended to.

Chapter Three

The role of women in poverty alleviation since 1994: opportunities and constraints

3. Introduction

This chapter describes and evaluates the role played by Rwandese women in poverty alleviation since 1994. It also discusses the opportunities and constraints for women at the community level in post genocide Rwanda. Findings are presented from both the documentary evidence and interviews of research participants. Evidence obtained from rural women's projects is also presented. In short this chapter is an attempt to answer research questions one and two of the study. Answering these questions entails paying attention to such issues as: women's contributions to food security and reduction of vulnerability; and the problems and/or impediments or challenges faced by women in the fight against poverty. As mentioned in Chapter one, the attempt to answer the first two research questions will be done ~~withusing~~ Béné's (2003, 2004) framework of understandings of poverty and poverty alleviation ~~in mind~~.

3.1 The role of women in poverty alleviation in post-genocide Rwanda

3.1.1 Women's role in heading households

Soon after the genocide, women assumed a variety of roles. Because many men had either died or been displaced by the genocide, many women, some as young as twelve years, found themselves assuming the role of household head (Powley, 2003). They had to provide finances, look for food, ~~buil~~dt shelters and look after orphans left by the genocide. According to the statistics released by the Rwanda Ministry of Gender and Family Promotion (2005) 31.8 percent of households in urban areas and 35.8 percent of households in rural areas are headed by women. Among the women who head households are the disabled (3.7 percent of the female population) and widows (13.9 percent of the female population (Rwanda Ministry of Gender and Family Promotion, 2005).

As Berthe Mukamusoni (cited in African Rights Working for Justice, Discussion Paper 2, 2004, p. 12) president of the National Women's Council and parliamentarian observed in 2000:

After the genocide, women had no choice. They had killed my husband. I had to earn a living and rebuild my life. How could I remain traumatized? I have eight children; six boys and two girls. If I dwelt on death, it would mean the death of my children as well. I had to wake up and get to work for their well-being and survival (Cited in African Rights Working for Justice, Discussion Paper 2, 2004, p. 12).

Rwandese women, thus, found themselves playing the roles of breadwinner, mother and father to children who were themselves also suffering from genocide trauma.

Table 3.1 below (from the Government of Rwanda Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper, 2002, p. 15) shows the characteristics of households in Rwanda. From Table 3.1, it is noted that, household participation in development and poverty prevention and reduction is largely based on a reliance on the land and agricultural activities. According to the Government of Rwanda Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (2002) most of the households in the categories: *umutindi nyakujya*, *umutindi* and *umukene*, are headed by women.

The descriptions for the three types of households go a long way to demonstrate the extent to which women are involved in the fight against poverty. Inherent in these descriptors are struggles for food entitlements (nutritious food; and fight for food security), the right to land, and access to education, health and financial assistance.

Table 3.1: Characteristics of households in Rwanda

Category of household	Characteristics
<i>Umutindi nyakujya</i> (those in abject poverty)	Those who need to beg to survive; they have no land or livestock and lack of shelter, adequate clothing and food. They fall sick often and have no access to medical care. Their children are malnourished and they cannot afford to send them to school.
<i>Umutindi</i> (the very poor)	The main difference between the <i>umutindi</i> and the <i>umutindi nyakujya</i> is that this group is physically capable of working on land or very small land holdings, and no livestock.
<i>Umukene</i> (the poor)	These households have some land and housing they live on their own labour and produce, and though they have no savings, they can eat, even if the food is not very nutritious. However they do have a surplus to sell in the market, their children do not always go to school and they often have no access to health care.
<i>Umukene wifashije</i> (The resourceful poor)	This group shares many of the characteristics of the <i>Umukene</i> but, they have small ruminants and their children go to primary school.
<i>Umukundi</i> (the food rich)	This group has larger landholding with fertile soil and enough to eat. They have livestock, often have paid jobs, and can access health care.
<i>Umukire</i> (the money rich)	This group has land and livestock, and often has salaried jobs; they have good housing, often own a vehicle, and have enough money to lend and to get credit from the bank. Many migrate to urban centres.

Table 3.1 is sourced from the Government of Rwanda Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper, (2002, p. 15)

Given, is a transcript of an interview done by the researcher with Kanyange Thereza, a genocide widow who is a member of Women Investment, Dufatanye. In Kinyarwanda, *dufatanye* means altogether. Dufatanye is a women's project established in 1995, to help women fight poverty through small scale businesses.

Kanyange: After the genocide I had nothing, my children were always hungry.
But now it's better, I now have two cows and we can now work the fields. Two of my children are now going to school.

Interviewer: Where did you get the two cows?

Kanyange: When I was *umutindi nyakujya* I did not have any faith that

things would be better for my children and me.... Then Dufatanye came by and gave me a loan I was able to buy and sell some vegetables until I raised and served enough to buy the first cow. When I repaid the loan I got another to buy the second cow...now I can till a piece of land ...and produce enough to feed my children and even sell some at the market (Kanyange was interviewed on 29 November 2005 in Butare).

This interview transcript shows how the efforts of women have improved livelihoods of some households:

3.1.2 Women participation in productive activities

Other than being household heads Rwandese women have played and continue to play important roles in subsistence agriculture, decision-making at community level, national leadership, education and health, government of local municipalities, reconstruction and national reconciliation. As an NGO employee put it:

I think although the genocide was a disaster, it has helped women realize their capacity, because women have been left on their own. Now when you walk in Kigali, you find the people working, sweeping, cutting trees...and the majority are women. There is no one to do the work so [they do it themselves]. Somehow it enhanced their capacity. It has empowered them...(Rwanda NGO employee cited in Powley, 2003, p. 33).

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This view is echoed by Marian Kanyijinya (interviewed by the researcher), a former sex worker who now works for Dutere Imbere, a women's project specialising in making and selling charcoal made from banana peels:

I used to think that a woman can only survive when there is a man to... provide. Now I see that it is possible to do the same things as the men do... Some things we women have to do them because there is no-one else to do it (Kanyijinya was interviewed on 05 December 2005 in Kigali).

Through their participation at household, community and national levels, Rwandese women have made positive contributions to sustainable development and poverty alleviation (Kimanuka, 2002; Rwanda Country Progress Report, 2002; Powley, 2003; Ministry of Gender and Family Promotion, 2005). Solange Umutoni, the director of Global Network for Education and Economic

Development (NEED), an NGO describes some of the contributions women are making in post-genocide Rwanda:

Many of these women who came from Uganda, Kenya, Belgium, Congo, etc after the genocide were more independent for instance, no woman would work in a petrol station before because they were shy and it was after all, a man's job. Now you see them there and in the construction sites as well as driving taxies without any complex. They saw other women looking for opportunities and it gave them a boost when they saw what women could do (Cited in African Rights, Working for Justice, Discussion Paper Number 12, 2004, p. 14).

Table 3.2 below shows the gender parities for Rwanda (extracted from Ministry of Gender and Family Promotion Report, 2005, p. 82).



Table 3. 2: Gender parity in productive activities 2005

Profession	Frequencies: Number of men or women as a percentage								
	URBAN			RURAL			OVERALL		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Senior Cadres/Public Service	1.0	0.4	0.7	0.1	0.0	0.1	0.3	0.1	0.2
Intellectual and Scientific Profession	3.6	3.4	3.5	1.4	0.7	1.0	1.7	1.0	1.3
Farmers / Fisherpersons	34.3	60.8	90.3	90.3	97.2	94.2	81.0	92.9	87.6
Craftsperson's/ workers	17.2	2.4	10.3	2.9	0.4	1.5	5.3	0.6	2.7
Unskilled workers and unskilled employees	17.6	19.0	16.3	2.8	1.0	1.8	5.3	2.8	3.9
Intermediate and administrative personnel	5.1	4.9	5.0	0.4	0.2	0.3	1.2	0.7	1.0
Drivers/Repairs	5.8	0.1	3.2	0.3	0.0	0.1	1.2	0.0	0.5
Service personnel and Traders	14.0	11.6	12.9	1.7	0.5	1.0	3.7	1.8	2.6
Armed Forces	1.4	0.0	0.8	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.3	0.0	0.1
Overall	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Numbers	249401	217832	467233	1256810	1651207	290801 7	1506211	1869039	3375250

Figures for the table were extracted from the Ministry of Gender and Family Promotion Report, (2005, p. 82).

These parities shown in the table are in terms of women participation in productive activities. Participation in productive activities is a way of empowerment, reducing vulnerability and marginalisation and reducing poverty (Béné, 2003, 2004; Overholt et al., 1991; Heyzer & Sen, 1994). From Table 3.2, 87 percent of productively active Rwandese depend on agriculture and/or fishery for livelihood. The majority of the people who depend on agriculture for survival live in the rural areas are women (90 percent men and 97 percent women).

As the table shows, only a small proportion of Rwandese women are employed in senior civil service positions. There are more women than men among crafts workers and service personnel traders. Overall, although some effort has been made to reduce gender disparities and improve gender equity in productive activities, inequities between men and women still exist. This is especially true given the fact that in Rwanda, women form the majority of the population. In Chapter two it was mentioned that empowering women (in this case through reducing gender disparities), increases their command over resources, and consequently reduces vulnerability. Reducing vulnerability is part and parcel of poverty alleviation (Béné, 2004).

Mukanyange is a rural farmer and vegetable vendor in Kabuga just outside Rwanda's capital Kigali. In an interview with the researcher, she described the response she got when she tried to set up a welding business:

Most people both men and women were laughing at me saying it is a man's business. I eventually gave up the idea. Now it's a bit better because people see that women also have strength...and can do the same jobs as men (Mukanyange was interviewed on 7 December 2005 in Kabuga).

Makanyange however, has very clear ideas about what it is that can be done to improve women participation in productive activities:

Boys and girls should all have the same rights to education, so that they can both get jobs. I also think that we as women must believe in ourselves and be confident enough to do jobs men do...but this could be a problem in our culture most men

think that a woman who is too outward going is a prostitute (Mukanyange was interviewed on 01 December 2005 in Kabuga).

It appears that much still has to be done in terms of changing attitudes and getting rid of stereotypes before women can fully participate in productive activities. What Makanyange is saying is in itself indicative of the existence of 'gender negative' attitudes and stereotypes in Rwandan society.

3.1.3 Women participation at the community level

One of the strategies used to fight poverty and promote development by the transitional, post genocide government in Rwanda was to have communities organize themselves and mobilise available resources in order to solve problems and participate in the delivery of goods and services, which are of value to the community (Powley, 2003; Ministry of Gender and Family Promotion Report, 2005). In this effort households were organized into cellules, which became working units for development and poverty alleviation. In these communities people would provide free labour (*umuganda*) for such activities as constructing public roads and bridges, cultivation and harvesting in communal fields, and building schools. According to the Government of Rwanda Poverty Reduction Paper (2002) the idea of cellules is a utilization of the traditional concept of *ubuhede mu kunwanya ubukene*, which is about communal action in the fields and households coming together to fight poverty. During the interview with the researcher, Mugabekazi of PROFEMME describes some of the benefits of *umuganda*:

With Umuganda people do not only come together to work, but also get opportunities to socialize, exchange views, share problems...and maybe find solutions. This is healthy for reconciliation in a society, which had been reaped apart by the ethnic hatred of the genocide (Mugabekazi was interviewed on 01 December 2005 in Kigali).

The idea of public work, *umuganda*, is a tradition with deep roots in the Rwandan culture and history. It need not be overemphasized that women are at the core of all *umuganda* activities.

The government of Rwanda encourages women to form groups for the purposes of income generating activities. When interviewed (cited in African Rights, Working for

Justice, Discussion Paper Number 12, 2004, p. 14), Esperance, a coordinator for women groups in Ndera, Kigali-Ngali describes how the formation of women's associations have entrenched opportunities for women:

They get together to cultivate their fields, to sew cloths or make and club together to carryout a costly project. These groupings are very useful to women because they also serve them as a meeting place, for socializing and solidarity. They meet regularly once a week not only to organize economic activities but also to talk about their problems, their success and to give each other advice. They also try to resolve conflicts between members and within families... (Cited in African Rights, Working for Justice, Discussion Paper Number 12, 2004, p. 14).

These sentiments are also raised by Mugabekazi of PROFEMME:

I think the introduction of women's only councils has gone a long way to give women a voice in making decisions about things which affect their lives and livelihoods. It is from women's only meetings that some projects which have changed the lives of many villagers have been produced (Mugabekazi was interviewed on 01 December 2005 in Kigali).

According to Faustin of the Ministry of Gender and the Promotion of Women (MIGEPROFE), the idea of women structures and their involvement in development came as a result of realizing that meaningful development could only emanate from grass root level (cited in African Rights, Working for Justice, Discussion Paper Number 12, 2004, p. 15). It came about after government consultations with the grass roots. Faustin explained:

We visited some villages to sit down with women to find out their problems. That is how the idea of women came about. They would form a link from the grass roots up to the top level...(cited in African Rights, Working for Justice, Discussion Paper Number 12, 2004, p. 15).

It is partly because of such contributions by women that Rwanda witnessed a gradual decrease in the percentage of people living below the poverty line between 1994 and 2000 (see Figure 3.1 below).

The poverty line is determined by calculating the levels of expenditures necessary to meet nutritional standards for food intake and a corresponding amount of non-food consumption for a given household. (Government of Rwanda Poverty Reduction Paper (2002, p. 14).

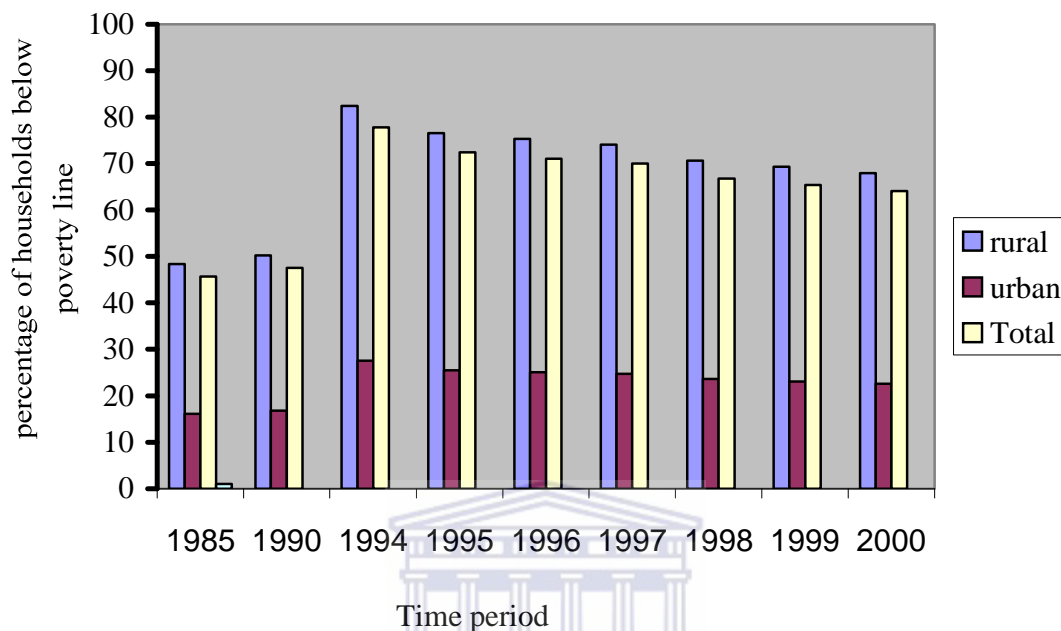


figure 3.1: Rwanda: decrease in number of people below the poverty line 1985 to 2000

Data for Figure 3.1 was sourced from Government of Rwanda Poverty Reduction Paper (2002, p. 14).

The number of people living below the poverty line is much higher in the rural areas compared to the urban areas. It is fair that the decline in poverty shown in Figure 3.1 should be attributed to women. According to Béné (2004) poverty reduction or in this context a decline in poverty is about gradually decreasing the number of people living below the poverty line. It has already been noted that in Rwanda the majority of these people are women.

3.1.4 Role of women in governance

Rwandese women have played important roles in political decision-making at community, district, provincial and national levels (Powley, 2003; Katusime, 2002; Ministry of Gender and Family Promotion, 2005). Through such organs as, councils for women only, they have been able to initiate policies and programmes that not only

address the root causes of genocide but also reduce poverty and contribute to sustainable development. A male farmer in Ruhengeri province commented:

Men in power tend to be corrupted; we have proof of that especially at grassroots level...men hesitated to vote for women, pretending women cannot lead. Today, men are convinced that women have what it takes to lead (Cited in Powley, 2003, p. 18).

A female farmer in Kibungo province concurred: “women render complete service, they are empathetic, and they are never corrupted” (cited in Powley, 2003, p. 18). Corruption and male dominance in local governance have been known to be impediments to women empowerment and access to resources in many parts of Africa. When women participate in decision-making, they can empower themselves in ways that can aid their fight against poverty.

Some women, however, are of the view that while the election of women into important decision making positions has benefited women in terms of influencing policy, women representation is still low and the elected or appointed women are detached from the grassroots and do little to raise the standard of living. A woman resident of Gikongoro complained:

The women in decision-making positions are not all that many, and they tend to stay in the offices. They don't bother much about meeting women in the villages, they don't really care about women in the rural areas...don't respect other women....Some women don't have education or competence that their posts require. (Cited in African Rights, Working for Justice, Discussion Paper Number 12, 2004, p. 44).

This extract from an interview with Joyce, the Woman's Council District Chairperson in Butare (interview with researcher) shows why women in positions fail to meet the grassroots:

We usually have problems with transport to take us for field visits to the villages. The problem is that most women expect solutions to always come from the top. They don't want to see themselves as capable of coming up with solutions to their own problems (Joyce was interviewed in Butare on 06 December 2005).

On the ground, however the women have different ideas. Mukagaga a flea market vendor in urban Kigali commented:

The problem is that when women are elected to Higher Office, they always forget where they came from. You hear some of them now saying 'I am a man myself'. I think power damages the thinking of some of us... (Mukagaga was interviewed in Kigali on 11 January 2006).

These sentiments might be genuine expressions of things going wrong as a result of lack of communication between those in positions and the grassroots. It could also be indicative of lack of confidence by women at grass root level.

While this is so, it can still be said that Rwanda has made considerable progress in promoting gender and empowering women in governance since 1994 (Powley, 2003; Kimanuka, 2002). For example, today, Rwanda has the highest proportion of female parliamentarians in the world (48 percent). This is in line with achievement of Republic of Rwanda and the United Nations, Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), (2003), which seek, among other things, to eliminate poverty and extreme hunger through such strategies as promoting gender and empowering women.

3.1.5 Women and health

Some of the areas in which much more has to be done to improve women participation include: HIV/AIDS education at community level- Rwanda is experiencing a rapid increase in HIV/AIDS cases; and access to health. According to the Republic of Rwanda Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning Report (2005) the country's overall HIV/AIDS prevalence, based mainly on antenatal care surveillance, is 5.1 percent. While this figure is relatively low (compared to many African countries), the HIV/AIDS problem continues to be a major issue for women development in Rwanda. A study cited in the Ministry of Gender and Family Promotion Report (2005) shows that in the province of Kibungo 72.5 percent of women give birth to children at home (the national average is 30 percent). Béné's (2004) understanding of poverty and poverty alleviation considers access to health as inseparable to descriptions of poverty. Consequently, it is an attribute of poverty alleviation. In this regard a lot still has to be done to reduce vulnerability.

Cohen, d'Adesky & Anastos (2005) have reported some of the health problems facing Rwandese women as lack HIV/AIDS treatment for genocide rape victims and continued gender based violence. They recommend that the women need “antiretroviral therapy, therapy for posttraumatic stress, support groups, food, housing, job training, health education and funds for their children” (Cohen, d'Adesky & Anastos, 2005, p. 613).

3.1.6 Women and education

By the definition of poverty given in this thesis (Chapter two), access to education is one way of empowerment and alleviating poverty Béné (2003, 2004). Female illiteracy is still very high with a national average of 62.2 percent (Ministry of Gender and Family Promotion, 2005). According to Kimanuka (2002) women participation in education, especially science and technology education (STE) is still very low. He recommends attracting girls to science and technology at secondary school level as a way of improving women's participation in STE. A World Bank Country Study (2004) for Rwanda notes that although gender disparities in education in general are not particularly large, enrollment in higher education was low for women (44 percent) and biased in favour of the rich.



3.2 Women and poverty alleviation: opportunities and constraints

3.2.1 Opportunities and constraints in agriculture

According to the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research Technical Advisory Committee (CGIAR) (1997) the road to poverty alleviation is a rocky, “rugged and twisting one”. In a country like Rwanda where the majority of the women survive on subsistence agriculture, focusing on poverty alleviation must of necessity promote the opportunities for the poor in diversifying income-generating activities. One way of doing this is through increasing agricultural productivity and diversifying crop production. This requires increasing farmers' access to fertilizers and other agricultural equipment and inputs. According to the Government of Rwanda Poverty Reduction Strategy Report (2002) the proportion of farmers using fertilizers or lime fell from 7 percent to 5 percent between 1990 and 2000. Some of the reasons for non-

use of fertilizers include lack of knowledge, lack of credit, high prices of the fertilizers. The effects of HIV/AIDS were also identified among the factors constraining women’s abilities to use land productively, especially in rural areas. Considered through the eye of Béné’s (2003, 2004) poverty alleviation framework, these constraining factors are variables which increase women’s vulnerability to poverty.

There are opportunities for women to establish small enterprises individually or collectively in agricultural production. This can only be realized if the women can get access to credit with low interest rates. Figure 3.2 and Table 3.3 below show that most people still rely on their own finances in establishing and running small-scale enterprises.

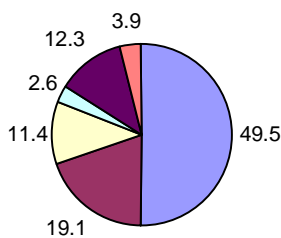


Figure 3.2: Sources of micro-enterprises' finances

Table 3.3: Sources of micro-enterprises' finances

Main Source of Finance	Proportion of enterprises
Own savings	49.5
Sale of property or other assets	19.1
Gifts or transfers	11.4
Loans (employer, NGO, financial institution)	2.6
Loans (friends, family)	12.3
Other	3.9

Data for Figure 3.2 and Table 3.3 was sourced from Government of Rwanda Poverty Reduction Strategy Report (2005, p. 109)

Many women still rely on their own savings (Table 3.3) in establishing small enterprises because of lack of skills and cultural traditions, which discourage women from taking credits.

Since the return of peace, Rwanda has been slowly increasing its share of the market in international trade. There are lots of opportunities for women to improve their livelihoods through diversifying crop production into such cash crops as coffee and

tea. Although production in these cash crops has risen to 60 percent of the pre-genocide level, only 24 percent of the producers are women (Government of Rwanda Poverty Reduction Strategy Report, 2002). The existence of cultural stereotypes, which view participation in commercial agriculture as a role for men, is one of the factors impeding women's participation in cash crop production in Rwanda and Africa in general (Powley, 2002; Government of Rwanda Poverty Reduction Strategy Report, 2005; Heyzer and Sen, 1994; Hay & Stichter, 1984). These stereotypes sometimes manifest themselves in the form of male prejudices. One woman who had obtained a 50 000 franc (US \$ 100) loan to start a business angered her husband for doing so. She reported:

My husband is still rooted in the old way of thinking, based on our culture. He remains convinced that when a woman starts an activity, which will enable her to stand on her feet economically, she will turn against her husband (Woman called Martha, cited in African Rights, Working for Justice, Discussion Paper Number 12, 2004, p. 38).

Other than cultural stereotypes, women participation in commercial agriculture has also been constrained by the demands of domestic responsibility (for example fetching water and firewood), and lesser abilities to exert decisions over men. Mwiza, a secretary in the Ministry of Gender and Women Development elaborated:

For the rural woman, such things as maternity leave are a luxury. They have to go to the fields, with babies on their backs...even when pregnant. Come back, fetch water, cook for the family and however tired ...still be expected to perform conjugal duties. Meanwhile the men will be enjoying their beer and bragging about how they rule their wives (Mwiza was interviewed on 09 January 2006 in Kigali).

According to the Government of Rwanda Poverty Reduction Strategy Report (2002) lack of access to markets is one of the major factors affecting women's participation. The same report has identified, low producer prices for the cash crops, poor states of roads in some areas, and the closure of warehouses (transit houses for cash crops) belonging to the public distribution company OPROVIA as some of the factors contributing to the low level of participation. It has been noted that many genocide widows have difficulties in accessing land and cash for commercial agriculture. In

addition to coffee and tea Rwanda's Ministry of Agriculture (MINAGRI) has identified potential opportunities in growing rice, maize, potatoes, soya and beans. This opportunity for women in cash crop diversification is recognized by Mukunde of Women in Investment (interview with researcher):

Interviewer: What do you think the women of Rwanda should do to alleviate poverty?

Mukunde: ... You see, I think the problem with our women is that they were brought up to think that you can only survive if you put faith in traditional ways of doing things...growing and selling traditional cash crops. They consider it risk to venture into these new cash crops, which as some of our projects show can do a lot to lift women out of poverty (Mukunde was interviewed on 06 January 2006 in Kigali).

In order to encourage women's diversification in cash crop production it might be necessary for government to provide incentives for the rural farmers who show the courage to diversify. Such incentives could be in the form of higher producer prices or subsidizing agricultural inputs for farmers who choose to grow new crops.

3.2.2 Opportunities and constraints in poverty alleviation: the Butare experience

A pilot project undertaken in the Butare province demonstrated that at community and household level it is possible for rural women to organize themselves into units that can effectively tackle problems of poverty (Government of Rwanda Poverty Reduction Strategy Report, 2002). In this project households and communities were asked to come up with their major poverty concerns, suggest ways of solving the problems and go on to put suggested plans and strategies into action. Households in the different categories (for example, *Umutindi nyakujya* -those in abject poverty; and *Umutindi* -the very poor) and communities were able to come up with such projects and strategies as: planting grass for goats; buying and selling goats; cultivating potatoes; selling labour; and reducing food consumption during certain times of the year to transform their situations of poverty. As the Government of Rwanda Poverty Reduction Strategy Report (2002) recommended providing households and communities with such opportunities as was tried in the Butare project as one way of empowering women to manage major poverty concerns. In the case of Butare these concerns were hunger, lack of knowledge, lack of energy and nutritious

food and management of projects. These efforts by the rural women of Butare fit into the descriptions of Béné (2003, 2004) who views poverty alleviation in rural communities as involving reduction of vulnerability and improvement of livelihoods through income generating projects. Efforts are being made to implement the Butare project nation wide. However, illiteracy and lack of micro-financial assistance continue to be the major impediments. Leoncie, a vive co-ordinator of women's committees in Butare town observed:

Women in rural areas are no longer afraid to take loans. Without activities that bring in money they know that they cannot hope for a better standard of living. ...but there are still hurdles to overcome like ignorance and male opposition. ...They use money badly because they don't have the experience and skills to come up with profitable projects (Cited in African Rights, Working for Justice, Discussion Paper Number 12, 2004, p. 38).

Thus, if women's projects are to succeed and benefit the majority of the poor (mainly women) then not only consistent financial and material support from whatever quarter is a pre-requisite, but also skills training and education. Jocyce, the chairperson of Butare Women's Council places the blame squarely on women themselves:

Unfortunately there are still many women who believe that it is not necessary for girls to be educated. My own aunt was telling me that sending girls to school will make them bad wives. She did not see anything good out of a woman other than to be a toy for a man's pleasure (From interview with Joyce on 26 December 2005 in Butare).

Such sentiments however, appear to be rooted more in illiteracy rather than in culture. If projects such as the Butare experiment are to succeed there is a need to work towards reducing illiteracy for women. Illiteracy is one of the factors constraining women's participation in projects in Rwanda (African Rights, Working for Justice, Discussion Paper Number 12, 2004).

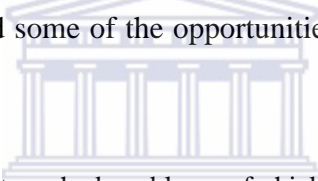
3.2.3 Dufatanye and Dutere Imbere projects

Dufatanye and Dutere Imbere are the examples of projects demonstrating how women can fight poverty through cooperative activities.

The Dufatanye project

Dufatanye is a small-scale business project run by women in a rural slum just outside Kigali. In this project, women in small groups apply for and get loans for small-scale business ventures. The Government of Rwanda in collaboration with several NGOs funds the project. Loans are given for periods ranging from six months to two years, with very low interest rates. Examples of small scale business activities include horticulture, vegetables farming, marketing fruits, poultry and flea markets. Women groups are given financial advice and skills training and projects are closely monitored and evaluated.

Ndirima, a genocide widow, has been participating in the Dufatanye project for the past three years. She and her group got a loan of 100 000 francs (US \$ 200.) to start a poultry project. She described some of the opportunities and challenges faced by the group:



When we started the project we had problems of chicks dying in numbers because we did not have knowledge about rearing chickens. We got help from an agricultural extension officer and we also got some training organized by the funders of the project... We were having problems finding markets for our chickens in Kigali...but we were lucky to strike a deal with one of the big chain super markets. The problem we face is transporting our chickens to Kigali. Transport costs are very high... (From interview with Ndirima on 03 January 2006 in Kigali).

The Dufatanye project demonstrates how women can empower themselves when provided with the right opportunity and given the necessary support. But, as Ndirima points out, the issue of finding markets for produce remains a problem for many rural women.

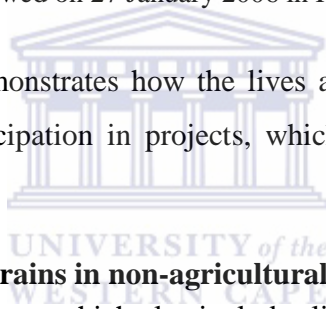
The Dutere Imbere project

Dutere Imbere is a project specializing in making charcoal from banana peels. This community based project started just after the genocide in rural Kigali. It is aimed at providing employment to mainly sex workers so as to discourage prostitution. The

project has since spread to other provinces. Since its launch, more than one hundred former sex workers have been able to be gainfully employed and improve their livelihoods. Mukarushema is a former sex worker who is employed as a general hand at one of the project's factories outside Kigali. She described how the project has changed her life for the better.

After my husband died I did not know what to do. I had nowhere to go with my child; nothing to eat...his relatives chased me away from the home accusing me of witchcraft. I was begging for food then I ended up as a prostitute on the streets of Kigali. I was not so luck as a hooker...I lost my teeth when one of the men beat me up. Even then I was not getting enough money for the child and myself. My sister advised me to look for a job. That is how I came to work for Dutere Imbire. Now it's a bit better ... although the money is not that much I sometimes send some to my mother in Butare. At Dutere Imbere they teach us that one can survive without being a sex worker...they also teach us about the dangers of HIV and AIDS (Mukarushema was interviewed on 27 January 2006 in Kigali).

Mukarushema's testimony demonstrates how the lives and livelihoods of women can be changed through participation in projects, which are well organized and professionally run.



3.2.3 Opportunities and constrains in non-agricultural production

Other than commercial agriculture, which also includes livestock production, there are opportunities for women participation in agro-processing, garment export and mining. These opportunities can be realized through both the informal and formal sectors (Government of Rwanda Poverty Reduction Strategy Report, 2002). For example, in mining women can organize themselves into small-scale mining units (at cellule level), which can exploit (in environmentally friendly ways) and sell tantalite. A discouraging factor has been that the development of small-scale mining has not been supported through institutional planning in both the private and the public sector (Government of Rwanda Poverty Reduction Strategy Report, 2002). Additionally, while the exploitation of tantalite can provide short-term reprieves to poverty, the current price of the mineral on the international market, is not encouraging for long-term development prospects and poverty alleviation. It has been suggested that the most promising opportunities are in the construction of materials. This sector however still requires lots of development.

Mukunde of Women in Investment is of the view that the promotion of women participation in non-agricultural activities can best be done if women can form associations for purposes of generating income through producing and selling such minerals as tantalite. In an interview with the researcher, she explained:

Woman groups can be encouraged to get short term loans for periods of say six months. The members of the group can then allocate each other duties such as auditor, marketing manager and production manager. They hold regular meetings to review progress and learn to run business efficiently along company lines (Mukunde was interviewed on 06 January 2006 in Kigali).

Mukagaga, who is now a flea market vendor in urban Kigali, once belonged to one such a group and made the following observation about some of the challenges such groups could face.

Most of us would work very hard for the good of the project. But you see we eventually gave up because we were not sure about how the finances were being run ...sooner than later there was greed and corruption and we lost some of our money. Eventually the whole thing just collapsed like that. I am suspicious of group activities because there is always danger of corruption and thieving of monies. I would rather do my things alone so that I don't blame anyone (Interviewed on 11 January 2006 in Kigali).

While the formation of women groups for purposes of income generation can increase their chances of accessing opportunities in mining and other non-agricultural activities, there is need to overcome the challenges of corruption. Corruption is one of the cancers destroying and derailing development on the African continent.

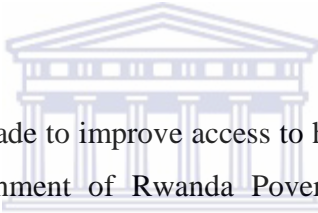
3.2.4 Public works, Health and Education

Our framework of poverty (Béné, 2003, 2004) recognizes that poverty alleviation is not only about getting income but also ensuring that the poor have entitlements to health, education and other services. For this reason, it is imperative that our discussion of opportunities and constraints recognizes poverty alleviation in “non-income areas”. Access to health and education are a part of these areas.

Public works

Currently, the government and donor sponsored rural public works programme has provided women with employment opportunities (Government of Rwanda Poverty Reduction Strategy Report, 2002). This has contributed to the reduction of unemployment and also supported agricultural production. In this programme women can participate in such activities as terrace building, management of forests and reclamation of land. The women work on this programme for a wage. A disadvantage of the programme is that the wages are rather too low and it might not be possible to start reasonably meaningful income generating projects from wages earned on the programme.

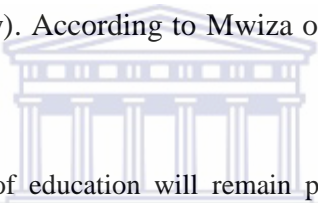
Health



In Rwanda, efforts are being made to improve access to health facilities and care through the *mutuelle* schemes (Government of Rwanda Poverty Reduction Strategy Report, 2002). In these schemes households can pay for health insurance for a period of one year. These schemes have not only increased women's access to health facilities but also helped in the fight against water borne diseases, malaria, HIV/AIDS and child diarrhea. The schemes involve participation of community health workers, traditional birth attendants and traditional health practitioners. Cost, shortage of trained health personnel, distance from health centers and ignorance continue to be the major constraints in ensuring that Rwandese women have access to health. It has been reported that in some provinces up to 70 percent of women give birth at home (Ministry of Gender and Family Promotion, 2005). The prevalence of water borne diseases is still high, especially in rural areas. Up to 42 percent of female-headed households still do not have access to safe drinking water. This is despite that Rwanda has been experiencing good rainfall. Improving access of poor households to basic medical care is a fundamental aspect of any poverty alleviation strategy for Rwanda (Household Archives, 1998).

Education

It has been noted that improving access to education (at least primary education) goes a long way towards helping women in the fight against poverty (Powley, 2003; Ministry of Gender and Women in Development, 2005). Education is empowering as it can open doors to employment. Since the genocide came to an end, the government of Rwanda in partnership with civil society has made efforts to increase opportunities for education for all citizens by increasing the numbers of both primary (from 1 283 in 1994 to 2 142 in 2002) and secondary schools (from 280 in 1994 to 378 in 2002). Although access to education for girls (especially at primary school) has been improving since 1994, both access and the quality of education received has been constrained by such factors as: shortage of qualified teachers -especially science teachers in secondary schools; poor retention of teaching staff; poor school infrastructure; availability of teaching and learning materials; and high costs to parents and power shortages (electricity). According to Mwiza of the Ministry of Gender and FamilyPromotion:



In rural areas the quality of education will remain poor for sometime to come. Schools in these areas suffer most from lack of electricity, shortage of qualified teachers and in-availability of teaching and learning materials...although government policy encourages gender parity and equity this is more difficult to put into practice in the rural areas because of higher levels of illiteracy. Many people still don't see the need to educate girls (Interviewed on 09 January 2006 Kigali).

Additionally the 4.6 percent bottleneck on moving from primary to secondary school excludes a large portion of the poor from increasing their skills beyond primary school level. Efforts are being made to improve the quantity and quality of teacher training (Ministry of Gender and Women in Development, 2002).

3.3 Conclusion

Much of this chapter's exploration of women's poverty alleviation efforts has centered on their participation in agricultural production. In this context, the attempt has been to show how Rwandese women have played roles and continue to play roles in poverty alleviation at the household and community levels. The conceptual reference to Béné's (2003, 2004) holistic framework of poverty and poverty alleviation necessitated an

assessment and evaluation of women's contributions in such dimensions as health, education and political decision-making. This discussion led to an examination of those factors and/or activities, which either enhance or impede women's poverty alleviation efforts. These factors can be broadly categorized as historical, social, political and economic. It appears that while Rwandese women continue to make tremendous efforts towards empowering themselves, improving their entitlement to services and resources, ensuring food security and reducing vulnerability, the road to poverty alleviation remains "rugged and rocky."

The next chapter examines the issue of how the legal, policy and institutional environment in post genocide Rwanda has provided opportunities and constraints in women's poverty alleviation efforts.



Chapter Four

Affirmative action and poverty alleviation: the legal, policy, and institutional environment in post genocide Rwanda

4.0 Introduction

This chapter evaluates Rwanda's post-genocide legal, policy and institutional environment in relation to women participation in poverty alleviation. In doing so issues of policy formulation, implementation and evaluation are considered. As mentioned in Chapter one of the thesis, Rist's (1994) evaluation of the policy cycle is the guiding framework. Part of the evaluation effort was to listen to the voices of the women themselves. These evaluative voices are presented in the form of extracts from the interviews done with the women involved in poverty alleviation. The [National Gender Policy, and poverty reduction strategies](#) are analyzed.

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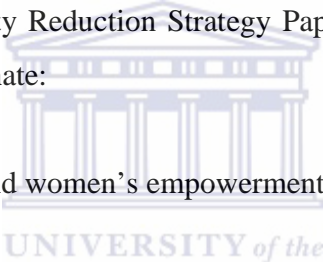
4.1 Background

For any given country, the extent to which citizens can participate in poverty alleviation and development is largely depended on the legal, policy and institutional environment. The creation and nurturing of an environment that is supportive of women participation in socio-economic development, sustainability and poverty alleviation requires concerted effort by the Government, the civil society and the private sector (Government of Rwanda Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper, 2002). According to Moser (1993), for developing countries such as Rwanda, ~~(Rwanda is one)~~, women's poverty alleviation efforts can only bear fruit if policy development and implementation are gender sensitive.

Following the end of the genocide, the Government of Unity and Reconciliation adopted the Beijing plan of action as a basis for promoting women participation in poverty alleviation and development (Republic of Rwanda, Country Progress Report, 1999; Powley, 2003; Government of Rwanda Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper, 2002). As early as September 1996, the government set up a National Action Steering Committee, which was tasked to formulate and implement a national policy for the promotion of

women participation in development. This effort was to result in several national seminars and conferences between 1996 and 1999. These multi-sectorial gatherings debated and produced plans of action on such issues as: Peace, Gender and Development; Fight Against Poverty; Women and Land Property; and Women and Decision Making. In addition to adopting the Beijing plan of action, Rwanda's post genocide government became signatory to various international instruments, all designed to promote women's rights and their participation in development. These instruments include the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), and the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) (1979).

It was in line with the efforts explained above that the government established the Ministry of Gender and Women Promotion (MIGEPROFE) in 1999 (Powley, 2003; Government of Rwanda Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper, 2002). The ministry was tasked to spearhead and coordinate:

- 
- (i) gender mainstreaming and women's empowerment;
 - (ii) enhancement of women participation in the development process; and
 - (iii) the crafting of legal and policy provisions that promoted gender equity and equality.

4.2 The legal, policy, and institutional environment for women in Rwanda

Since 1994, the government has enacted legislation and put into place several policies all designed to promote the spirit of the Beijing plan of action and women participation in development. Rwanda's new constitution incorporates gender concerns. Female parliamentarians have been working against gender discrimination and lobbying for changes in a variety of laws to secure rights for women in many areas (African Rights, Working for Justice, Discussion Paper Number 12, 2004). This effort by women parliamentarians is recognized by some of the women themselves. An employee of the Rwanda Defence Forces commented:

Certain rights have been won, thanks to the presence of women in prominent positions who lobbied hard. Female MPs and women who took part in writing in the new Constitution made the laws more favourable to women and generally did a lot in advancing their rights. The law of marriage settlements and the categorization of rape as a crime punishable by death are concrete examples (Cited in African Rights, Working for Justice, Discussion Paper Number 12, 2004, p. 22).

Rwandese women played a critical role in crafting the National Gender Policy.

4.2.1 National Gender Policy

What is described below encapsulates what has been called the National Gender Policy (NGP) for Rwanda (Republic of Rwanda, Country Progress Report, 1999; Government of Rwanda Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper, 2002; Ministry of Gender and Women Promotion, 2000; Ministry of Gender and Women Promotion, 2003). The policy aims to promote decentralization of political and economic power to ensure that women participate in development. It addresses gender inequalities and inequities in all areas of development. According to the Ministry of Gender and Women Promotion (2003) the National Gender Policy incorporates National Poverty Assessment (NPA), which is aimed at action planning and developing women participation in local government structures at community and cellule levels, and human resource capacity building at cellule level, which makes use of the traditional concept of *ubuhede mukurwanya ubukene*. This means fighting poverty together in communities. Suzane Ruboneka of PROFEMME explained:

We urged the women to come together in spite of their differences, where they had been living and their motivations, in order to build our collective on what we had in common as mothers and citizens, rather than looking at what kept us apart. This way we could rebuild the country for our children (Cited in African Rights, Working for Justice, Discussion Paper Number 12, 2004, p. 18).

Through a process of wide consultation with all stakeholders (government, civil society, private sector), the developed NGP identified some of the areas where promotion of gender needs and interests were required as: poverty reduction; agriculture and food security; health; HIV/AIDS; education and professional training; gender based violence;

peace; and information dissemination. Empowering women and reducing vulnerability in these areas contributes to poverty alleviation (Béné, 2004). Part of the MIGEPROFE Gender Policy objectives reads:

To integrate women's and men's, girls and boy's constraints, options, incentives, needs across the National Poverty Reduction process i.e. poverty participatory assessment, poverty diagnosis and analysis, poverty policies, monitoring and evaluation of those policies (Ministry of Gender and Women Promotion, The National Gender Policy, 2003, p. 15)

To aid the monitoring and evaluation of poverty, the government put into place the Poverty Observatoire, which acts as the overall coordinator of poverty monitoring. It selects poverty indicators and guides research and dissemination of information on the causes of poverty (Government of Rwanda Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper, 2002). The poverty monitoring structure involves the Budget Department, the Statistics Department, a host of government ministries and civil society. Joyce, the District Chairperson of the Butare Women's Council had this to say about this effort:

As the Women's Council Chairperson I attend meetings in many government ministries. Most of the NGOs who want to launch new projects in this district come through my office. Thus, as a Women's Council we are always in touch and aware of what is going on... which areas are most affected by for example famine and who needs the most help and where...I think it is a good idea by our government to encourage all departments to work together... (Interviewed on 6 December 2005 in Butare).

4.2.2 Law on succession, liberalities and matrimonial regimes

In 1999 the government passed a law on succession, liberalities and matrimonial regimes (Powley, 2003) Law Number 22/99 of 12 November 1999. Among other things the law empowers widows to inherit the assets and property of deceased spouses and allows girls to inherit their parents' estate -including land. This is in contrast to the traditional system which tended to favor men and boys when it came to inheritance. Today, marriages done under customary law are recognized as legally binding. Nathalie of Save, Butare, observed:

Today, women enjoy a measure of respect in the family and the law gives her the same rights as her brothers. Before, when a girl got married, she lost all her rights in her parent's home. The abuse of women by their husbands is no longer as common, but it is not because men have understood the relevance of gender promotion, but because of their respect for, and fear of, the law (Cited in African Rights, Working for Justice, Discussion Paper Number 12, 2004, p. 22).

The passage of the law on succession, liberalities and matrimonial regimes is an effort on the part of government to empower women by helping them get access to land, and other resources that are useful in the fight against poverty. According to Béné (2003, 2004) giving people rights or entitlements to land and other resources is part and parcel of poverty alleviation. Sometimes, however, even when the law protecting women's rights to land and other property exists, women do not always reap the benefits. Mugabekazi of PROFEMME identified some of the reasons for this:

Although many laws have been passed in support of women, most women especially in rural areas remain ignorant of the laws, which are designed to protect them. I think the problem lies with information dissemination (Interviewed on 01 December 2005 in Kigali).

Even when women are aware of their rights they are reluctant to take family disputes involving land to court. Many women are nervous about giving testimonies in court. The cultural environment tends to dissuade women from taking up legal cases preferring instead, amicable out of court settlement, which in most cases are unfavourable to women. Additionally, as Therese Mukamurisa observes: "The judicial process is very slow and inefficient. This is disheartening to the women who have dared to lodge a complaint" (African Rights, Working for Justice, Discussion Paper Number 12, 2004, p. 24). Although some progresses have been made, it is still a long way to go before women's rights can be fully realized.

4.2.3 Laws and policies related to women participation in governance

In order to facilitate women participation in governance and hence empower them in the decision making process, the government put into place the Triple Ballot System (Powley, 2003). In this system there is voting for the general ballot, the women's ballot (voting only for women candidates who become members of women's councils) and the

youth ballot. Rwanda's President Paul Kagame recognizes the role that women can play in poverty alleviation through participation in governance. He commented:

Increased participation of women in politics is, necessary for improved social, economic and political conditions of their families and the entire country (Paul Kagame cited in Powley, 2003, p. 25).

Women councils play key roles in skills training and advocacy of women rights in education, health and other poverty alleviation areas at grassroots level (Ministry of Gender and Women Promotion, 2003). The role of women councils however, has been constrained by lack of resources; inadequate funding and lack of time since working on the councils is voluntary -most women are already overburdened by domestic chores. Suffice to mention that, although efforts to politically empower women should be applauded, there are still serious gender imbalances in women participation in governance. For example, in 2001 only 27 percent of those elected to office at district council level were women (Powley, 2003; Government of Rwanda Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper, 2002). There are still very few women mayors and heads of cellules. Very few women hold positions of influence in administration. On this issue, Mukunde of Women in Investment commented:

Although women now have the 30 percent quota in administrative positions, the number of women holding positions of real influence is insufficient. We do have some gender advisors but these don't have real power. Power is still in the hands of men who are more educated.... This is especially so rural areas. It's a bit better in urban areas where you have some educated women who take advantage of the open environment in gender politics (Mukunde Interviewed on 6 January 2006 in Kigali).

Josiane (cited in African Rights, Working for Justice, Discussion Paper Number 12, 2004, p. 43) concurs:

If the same State has appointed women to decision-making positions, it should monitor what these women, who are appointed on behalf of others, are doing. We don't see tangible gains yet. Rural women are the worst off and they haven't drawn benefits from gender politics...law related to women's rights... (are needed) ... law which protects women by abolishing polygamy is in the Constitution (cited in African Rights, Working for Justice, Discussion Paper Number 12, 2004, p. 43).

Another area in which the government has put up provisions supporting women participation is that of peace and reconciliation. The adoption of the *gacaca* system of trial and justice has allowed many women to play roles in post-genocide justice. The post genocide period has witnessed the trial of those people who were accused of being involved in the genocide in one way or the other. This is a system of trial and justice based on the cultural tradition of involving villagers and other community members in the dispensation of justice. In *gacaca* courts women can be appointed as judges. Miriam Kanyijinya a member of Dutere Imbire had this to say about women judges in the *gacaca*:

Interviewer: What can you say about women participation in the *gacaca*?

Miriam: I would say the women judges there are more sympathetic to women than the men, especially on issues of men beating women and rape. The men I talk to say they are unfair. But I think it is good that women can also do things which in our tradition were only reserved for men (Kanyiginya was interviewed on 05 December 2006 in Butare).

In traditional Rwandan society, judges' positions were reserved for a community's respected wise men called, *inyangamugayo*.

The *gacaca* system has been criticized as imperfect as many of those who act as judges are illiterate and not versed in the law (Government of Rwanda Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper, 2002). However, it has been noted that peace and stability are essential pre-requisites for development and consequently poverty alleviation (Powley, 2003; Government of Rwanda Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper, 2002). In this way the participation of women in the *gacaca* system is part of the poverty alleviation effort as it guarantees peace through some form of placation of those who were wronged by the genocide. It enhances psychological and emotional stabilization, which according to Béné's (2003, 2004) conceptualization of poverty, are necessary ingredients of the poverty alleviation effort. Moreover, the fact that women participate in the system is *per se* an act of empowerment and consequently a poverty alleviation effort as it promotes gender equity and equality.

4.2.4 Addressing poverty through financial support

In post genocide Rwanda one of the gender friendly policy measures has been the Gender Budgeting initiative of 2002, which deliberately makes an effort to make the national budget sensitive to the needs and aspiration of women (Republic of Rwanda, Country Progress Report, 1999; Government of Rwanda Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper, 2002). To help reduce poverty, the government has set up a Common Development Fund (CDF), which is 10 percent of all government revenue. This fund is earmarked for funding development projects at the district and community levels. Much of this funding has been channelled to women farmers' groups and other women projects. This effort has been complemented by the National Bank of Rwanda (NBR) micro-finance policy. The bank has put in place a scheme designed to promote poor people's access to finance at reasonable interest rates. Additionally, the bank has enacted micro-economic policies geared towards liberalisation, commercialisation and privatisation of the economy. This is aimed at creating formal jobs and female entrepreneurship.

In 1998 the government established the Women's District Fund to support women capacity building through the provision of micro-credits. This fund is designed to help those women who have no security for loans. While some women have benefited from this scheme, problems still exist. Mwiza of The Ministry of Gender and Women Development said:

Some women feel that they either too old or too uneducated to get micro-credit. Some husbands also do not allow their wives to take credit. The result is that sometimes money earmarked for disbursement can go for weeks without being taken (Mwiza was interviewed on 09 January 2006 Kigali).

4.2.5 Poverty alleviation: institutional support

To a large extent, Rwanda's development and poverty alleviation efforts have benefited from the support of Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs). Most of the NGOs giving support to women are under the umbrella of PROFEMMES/ TWESE HAMWE (Ministry of Gender and Women Promotion, 2002, 2003; Government of Rwanda

Poverty Reduction Paper, 2002). In *Kinyarwanda*, *Twese Hamwe* means altogether. PROFEMMES is a women's federation grouping together those NGOs doing work in support of women participation in development. It works together with and advises the Ministry of Gender and Women Development and coordinates the activities of NGOs involved in gender related activities such as, women participation in development and issues of women democracy. The number of women NGOs affiliated to PROFEMMES rose from 13 at the end of the genocide (1995) to 40 in 2003. Women NGOs have been relatively successful in promoting development and poverty reduction at the community level through sponsoring and monitoring small-scale projects, for example in farming. Mwiza, a secretary in the Ministry of Gender and Women Development acknowledges the important role NGOs are playing in Rwanda's post-genocide poverty alleviation:

Such NGOs as NEED [Global Network for Education and Economic Development] and SVN [a Dutch NGO] are doing a lot to help our people overcome poverty. Our government is very happy with their efforts. I think it was good that after the genocide we had so many people from outside coming to help (Mwiza Interviewed on 09 January 2006 in Kigali).

However, according to the Government of Rwanda Poverty Reduction Paper (2002), illiteracy and lack of skills have derailed the success of some NGO projects. The report recommends the need for educating Rwandese women in the fight against poverty. On the work of civil society in remote rural areas, John Mutamba, the director of gender at MIGEPROFE commented:

Civil society is closer to the population and does a good job, but they don't deal with the real problems because they are too dependent on donors and don't decide their own priorities (Cited in African Rights, Working for Justice, Discussion Paper Number 12, 2004, p. 47).

In addition to PROFEMMES there are other actors involved in the implementation of the NGP. Under the coordination of the MIGEPROFE other government ministries work in partnership to promote women development in a multi-sectorial strategy (Ministry of Gender and Women Promotion, 2002, 2003). Ministries involved in the implementation of the NGP include the Ministry of Finance (MINECOFIN), the Ministry of Local Government (MINELOC), the Ministry of Agriculture (MINAGRI), and the Ministry of

Education (MINEDUC). The ministries work together in aligning their programmes and preparing budgets to avoid duplication. In terms of gender mainstreaming and women participation in development, each one has clearly defined goals and roles. Each ministry identifies key donors and works with them to promote women in development. In implementing the NGP ministries are guided by the need to decentralize government participation in development. Additionally, donors are required to follow the policy framework and strategy within a ministerial sector. This allows ministries some control over allocation of donor resources. It enables them to channel resources to marginalized communities and/or households in line with the NGP.

4.3 Gender related policy and the needs and issues facing rural women

In the previous sections, an attempt was made to highlight the legal, policy and institutional framework existing in post-genocide Rwanda in relation to women participation in poverty alleviation. This section evaluates the extent to which gender related policy is supportive of the poverty needs and issues facing rural women. In doing so it is necessary to first identify what these needs and issues are. This evaluation requires that Rwanda's National Gender Policy be examined. Such an examination necessitates an assessment of the policy documents, the policy development process and policy implementation (Rist, 1994; Gray, 2001; Moser, 1993).

4.3.1 Poverty needs and issues facing rural women

In Rwanda, the major poverty needs and issues for rural women include: unemployment; poor access to health and sanitary facilities; food insecurity; shelter; access to clean water; illiteracy and entitlement to land and agricultural inputs (Powley, 2003; Government of Rwanda Poverty Reduction Paper, 2002). Mugabekazi of PROFEMME noted:

If you want to see Rwanda's poverty go to the rural areas. There you will find children who are hungry and naked. You see people travelling long distances to get water... in many cases the water is dirty and unfit for human consumption. In such districts as Bugesera and Gikongoro clinics are very far and there is no transport to carry the sick to hospital... who will be suffering from diseases which are preventable (Mugabekazi was Interviewed on 01 December 2006 Kigali).

These problems form part of the poverty dynamics described by Béné (2003, 2004) as economic exclusion, social marginalization, class exploitation, and political disempowerment. Evaluation of the Rwanda's NGP, therefore, needs to be done with the view of judging the extent to which NGP provisions cognize the above mentioned concerns; poverty needs and issues for rural women.

4.3.2 The National Gender Policy

Table 4.1 below summarises some of the poverty needs and issues of Rwanda's rural women and the NGP provisions, which can be judged to be supportive of these needs and issues. The table is derived from information contained in the NGP (Ministry of Gender and Women Promotion, 2002, pp. 15-20).



**Table 4.1: An evaluation matrix of the NGP in relation to needs and issues
Affecting rural women**

Rural women poverty concern area	NGP objectives	Policy implementation progress
Access to health and sanitary facilities	To ensure that specific health needs of women and men, boys and girls are effectively addressed through accessible and affordable health services.	Access to facilities still poor for most women because of distance and financial constraints, e.g. 70 percent of rural headed households still do not have access to hygienic sanitary conditions. Better maternity leave conditions for women are required.
Agriculture and food security	To integrate gender dimension into the land law, agriculture policies and programmes.	Constitutional and legal provisions are in place to support women entitlement to land but cultural prejudices against women are major impediments. Need for agricultural training for rural women.
HIV/AIDS	To integrate gender dimension into the fight against HIV/AIDS spread taking into account the multi-access of the pandemic.	There is still need to strengthen primary health care provision conditions for rural women.
Education and professional training	To ensure that boys and girls have equal access to educational opportunities.	Access of girls to primary school enhanced by policy, but little progress in ensuring women access to higher education, e.g. increase women medical doctors. There is need to promote vocational skills training for rural women.
Governance and decision-making	To ensure representation and effective participation of women and men, girls and boys in governance.	There is still need to improve rural women representation at the top level of government. Some progress made with the establishment of women's only councils.
Peace building and reconciliation	To ensure that women, men, boys and girls participate equally and effectively in peace building, unity and reconciliation initiatives and programmes.	Good progress with the establishment of the <i>gacaca</i> , but high levels of illiteracy continue to be a major impediment.

Source: Ministry of Gender and Women Promotion, 2002, pp. 15-20.

In a preamble to the National Gender Policy, Rwanda's Minister of Gender and Women Promotion, Marie Mukantabana, sums up the thrust of the gender policy:

...the Policy is coherent with the National Poverty Reduction priorities and the decentralisation process in which the government is engaged and provides strategic framework ... that guides national actions towards promotion of gender equality and equity for the well being of... women, men, boys and girls (Marie Mukantabana, in Ministry of Gender and Women Promotion, 2003, p.4).

The NGP thus, starts from a recognition of the existence of poverty and the need to decentralize poverty reduction strategies in order to reach the majority of Rwandese -who according to the statistics are women (Powley, 2003). This commitment is evident throughout the NGP document. For example one of the policy's guiding principles states:

The National Gender Policy upholds the Government of Rwanda commitment to promote effective and full participation of all citizens, men and women, boys and girls in the development process (Ministry of Gender and Women Promotion, 2003, p.13).

While the need to reach all citizens is recognized by the policy, getting poverty alleviation programmes to remote rural places remains a problem. This problem is acknowledged by John Mutamba, the director of gender at MIGEPROFE:

The programmes remain centered on the towns. Some women's collectives have just one representative for each province and don't have adequate financial and human resources to make contacts with families in remote areas. This is a matter that affects both the ministry and civil society (Cited in African Rights, Working for Justice, Discussion Paper Number 12, 2004, p. 47).

This appears to be a clear problem of policy implementation and lack of resources. A woman gender activist in Butare puts it succinctly:

Gender policy is well set out, but its application is still confined to senior officials and urban environments and their surroundings. As long as people at the grassroots are left out, it will remain theoretical. And the funds will be used largely to finance conferences meetings and International Women's Day in order to make the policy more visible. This may serve to justify the work of officials in the higher echelons, but it does so little to help the country attain the stated objectives...(Cited in African Rights, Working for Justice, Discussion Paper Number 12, 2004, p. 47-48).

The NGP identifies areas for gender mainstreaming and national development as: agriculture and food security; health; HIV/AIDS; Education and professional training; governance and decision-making; and peace and reconciliation. These are more or less the same areas identified above as of concern to the rural women. In that context, therefore it might be said with some degree of confidence that the NGP is sensitive to the needs and issues facing women. However, it must be noted that there is nowhere in the policy document where the term “rural woman” is mentioned. To this end the policy can be said to take “a generalistic and implicit approach” to rural women and poverty alleviation as it seeks to address poverty in general rather than specifically target “poverty affecting rural women”.

Politically, the constitutional framework and the National Gender Policy have gone a long way to promote gender equity and empowerment of women through their provisions for women elections at council and district levels. These provisions must be seen as efforts to empower women most of whom live in the rural areas. In practice or at the implementation level however, the majority of the poor rural women have benefited little from the constitutional and policy provisions designed to enhance their participation in political decision-making. The implementation has been accused of lacking ethnic balance and inclusivity -in terms of rich and poor, educated and un-educated. As a meeting of the Rwandan Women Leaders Caucus observed in 2003:

“...Those women who hold high-level posts in government and civil society are, like their male counterparts, predominantly” those who are educated and of good socio-economic standing (Powley, 2003, p.34). Thus, while on paper democratisation and decentralisation appear to promote the interests of rural women, in practice the poor are, to a considerable extent, marginalized because of exclusivity based on level of literacy and socio-economic status. As Gray (2001) and Rist (1994) point out, policy evaluation cannot be complete without an examination of policy implementation.

4.3.3 Poverty alleviation policy: participatory poverty assessment

While the NGP is apparently implicit about poverty reduction for rural women, the Participatory Poverty Assessment (PRP) plan (this is part of the national poverty

alleviation strategy), which Cabinet officially adopted in 2000 recognizes the need for relevance of poverty reduction policies. Its poverty evaluation strategy calls for policies, which are relevant “to individuals and communities on the basis of their effectiveness, and level of participation” (Government of Rwanda Poverty Reduction Paper, 2002, p. 11). Specifically, it calls for participatory rural poverty appraisal strategies at cellule and district levels in order to ensure that the identification of poverty problems and the generation of solutions are relevant to the needs of households and communities. In this context, it might be argued that existing poverty alleviation policy is directly or indirectly supportive of the concerns of rural women. This is so especially when in line with this policy poor people (this includes the rural poor) is given opportunities to identify and manage their poverty problems as happened in the Butare pilot project.

On paper the participatory poverty assessment looks wholesome. Interviews with women on the ground however reveal worrying implementation problems. When Mukanyange a rural woman was asked (interview with researcher) about whether the parliamentary and council representatives of her area were effective in articulating women’s problems she answered:

I think our representatives are in it for the money. Once in a while, we hear them on the radio claiming to represent our interests but they rarely come to us to listen to our problems except when they are going to be elections. That is when they come to make promises they never fulfil (Mukanyange was interviewed 07 December 2005 Kabuga).

4.4 Poverty alleviation programmes and rural communities

In addition to the supportive gender and poverty alleviation policies mentioned in the previous section, the government and civil society have put into place a variety of poverty alleviation programmes. Some of these programmes can be described as specifically targeted at rural communities. These programmes are based on the realization that the majority of Rwandese live in the rural areas and that women form the greater part of the population.

Mention has already been made of the public works programme in which rural people do development work in return for wages, which were however, noted to be low. Other

programmes mentioned are: the *mutuelles* health insurance scheme designed to improve access to health for poor households, including rural ones; the *umuganda* programme where people do public work for free -those who don't want to work pay money for projects; and the Common Development Fund sponsored by the National Bank of Rwanda (NBR) -which mainly funds small-scale community agricultural projects.

The government has also put in place a resettlement programme in which houses are built for households with government assistance. In this project, which encourages the traditional concept of *imudugudu* (houses where people live close together), government encourages building of houses close together so that there can be easy provision of such resources as water, sanitary facilities, schools and clinics (Government of Rwanda Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper, 2002). Part of the rationale for this programme is about conserving land, since Rwanda is such a small country with a high population density. In Rwanda, land is one of the scarcest of commodities. This programme however, has suffered from poor planning and inadequacy of resources. Some of the houses built under the programme have been of very poor quality. Moreover some villagers, as a result of cultural stereotypes and orientations, and also because of illiteracy, are reluctant to move into such settlements.

In agriculture, the government is striving to make available extension services in order to give rural farmers advice on crop and animal production strategies. Supported by research (by the Institute of Agricultural Research), the agricultural extension activity focuses on educating rural farmers on growing drought resistant crop varieties, improving management skills and use of agricultural technology. A major impediment for this programme has been the shortage of skilled agricultural extension officers.

As the above attempts illustrate, it can be said that some effort is being made by government to put into place those programmes and projects which can help the poor in the fight against poverty. A host of factors including, the literacy level, availability of resources and trained person power however determine the extent to which success can be made.

4.5 Conclusion

In this chapter an exploration was made of the legal, policy and institutional support for women's poverty alleviation efforts in Rwanda. It became apparent that the government has adopted a multi-sectoral approach to gender and poverty alleviation. Apparently, while the enacted policies are gender sensitive and progressive, they do not specifically isolate the empowerment of the rural woman. Rather they take a "generalistic and implicit approach" to poverty alleviation. It appears that policy implementation is suffering from a combination of impediments including HIV/AIDS, illiteracy, lack of skilled personnel and inadequacy of financial resources. The encouraging part is that the government recognizes the dynamic nature of poverty alleviation policy and programme development. As Moser (1993) observes, such recognition is fundamental to the enactment of policies that can unshackle women from the chains of poverty, disease and illiteracy.



Chapter Five

Conclusions and recommendations

5.0 Introduction

This study set out to describe and evaluate:

- the role of Rwandese women in poverty alleviation;
- the opportunities and constraints faced by women in the poverty alleviation effort; and
- the extent to which the legal, policy and institutional environment has either been supportive or impeding poverty alleviation efforts by women in post genocide Rwanda.

The philosophy guiding the discussions was based on Béné's (2003, 2004) understanding of poverty and poverty alleviation. Essentially, this understanding takes a holistic approach and views poverty as existing in dimensions, which are political, economic, social and cultural. It holds that poverty and poverty alleviation are not just about low income and failure to get basic human needs, such as shelter, food, health water, sanitary facilities, access to health facilities and education, but also encapsulate socio-political power and rights, economic empowerment, the reduction of vulnerability, increased food security and entitlements to a host of other material resources. Poverty and poverty alleviation were described as gendered. This understanding of poverty and poverty alleviation was used as a conceptual tool to assess policies on poverty and gender in post-genocide Rwanda. To support this endeavor, the study elicited the voices of women participating in the poverty alleviation efforts. In the following section, the major findings of the study are outlined.

5.1 The role of women in poverty alleviation in post-genocide

Rwandese women have played and continued to play important roles in development and poverty alleviation. Many of these roles were forced upon the women because of the situation that existed after the genocide. Many men had either died or been displaced by the genocide and it was left to the women, including widows and young girls to play such roles as heading households, building shelters, fending for families, supporting genocide orphans and the disabled and doing the domestic chores expected of women in African culture. As some of the interviewed women indicated, the poverty situation and the needs in the post genocide era “helped them realize their capacity” because they were left with “no choice” but to do things on their own.

Women have taken leading roles in subsistence agriculture. They have been the cornerstone of subsistence agricultural production, providing most of the labour for tilling the land, weeding and harvesting. However, although there have been some encouraging signs, women participation in commercial agriculture remains low. The women have also been showing a reluctance to diversify into non-traditional crop production and animal husbandry. Most of those involved in commercial agriculture believe that tea and coffee are the only commercial crops. Participation in agricultural activities is part and parcel of the poverty alleviation effort as it helps in women’s economic empowerment and reduction of vulnerability (Bene , 2003; 2004).

Rwandese women have been playing leading roles in community based activities. These activities are part of the post-genocide national reconstruction. In these community-based activities women have been participating in public works programmes; building roads, bridges and schools.

What is encouraging is the participation of women in post-genocide peace and reconciliation where they continue to play leading roles as judges in the *gacaca*. Although men still dominate political governance, Rwandese women have made strides

in empowering themselves in the decision-making process. Women have been contributing to the process of democratization through participation in women's only councils, district and provincial councils and national legislature. It was however noted that in spite of the tremendous contributions the women have made to poverty alleviation, gender inequalities still exist. The redress of these imbalances continues to be a national agenda.

5.2 Opportunities and constrains in poverty alleviation

5.2.1 Opportunities

Rwandese women have opportunities to uplift themselves and reduce, prevent, eliminate, and eradicate poverty through participation in agricultural and non-agricultural production. In agriculture the major window of opportunities appears to be in the production and marketing of such cash crops as coffee and tea. In recent times however, opportunities have also arisen in diversification into such crops as potatoes, maize, beans and sorghum. Rwandese women have the opportunities to access loans through the Ministry of Finance projects for the purposes of promoting diversification in agricultural production. Many non-governmental organizations for example Dutere Imbere have come up with projects Dufatanye in support of rural women's poverty alleviations, as the Dufatanye projects illustrates, women can utilize available opportunities for the betterment of their lives and livelihoods.

There are opportunities for women in the public sector. The government program for example has provided women with the opportunity to be formally employed although the money paid to women participating in public health program is not much; it goes a long way to reduce the level of suffering

5.2.2 Constraints

Women participation in commercial agriculture is constrained by such factors as poor access to agricultural inputs (fertilizers, seeds, lime, etc.), lack of knowledge and management skills, the demands of domestic chores and the scourge of HIV/AIDS.

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

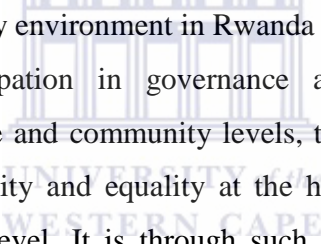
Overall it can be said that the legal, policy and institutional environment in post-genocide Rwanda is supportive of women participation in poverty alleviation. The government has gone a long way to enact legal and policy provisions, which can be described as gender and poverty alleviation friendly. 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:

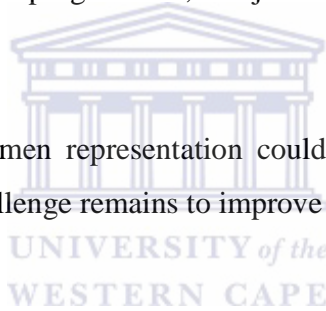
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- (i) While the legal and policy environment in Rwanda is generally supportive of women participation in governance and political decision-making, especially at cellule and community levels, there is need for legislation that ensures gender equity 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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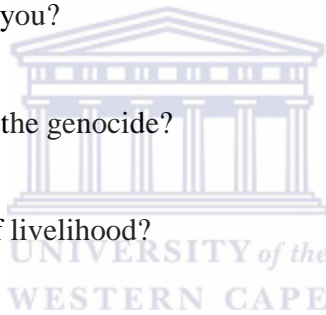
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APENDIX A

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