CHAPTER-IV

Transformation in Rwanda and Position of Women Pre-and Post Rwanda

The aim of this chapter is to explain how do gender notions have constructed, confirmed and altered conflicts into transformed sustainable developed Rwanda. In all these displacements women, girls, men and boys are affected disproportionately. Irrespective of the fact that how do women and men, girls and boys initiate, perceive, deal and solve conflicts and they do so in different ways? In Rwanda, how women are supporting life in post-traumised life. Women are connecting themselves including academicians, NGOs, social worker, small entrepreneur, working women, house wives etc. This chapter focuses on the transformation phase of Rwandan women from pre-genocide society to post-genocide society. The main aim of this chapter is to explore real nature of women, which always construct and nurture life. Rwandan women have proved themselves as the life line of Rwanda, which has given a new meaning to their life. In this chapter, I have covered and analyzed every transformatory aspect of women’s lives in great detail which includes socio-political, economic, cultural, intellectual and technical & non-technical sustainable development in Rwanda. In this chapter I have tried to explain how in the absence of majority of men, Rwandan women take hold of every responsibility without being discriminating from the existing male population. The aim of this chapter is to explain how Rwandan women came out of trauma & tragedy and create opportunity for societal reorganization, new and amended political philosophies and avenues for socioeconomic growth and capacity building. The reconstruction period is the time when women and other disadvantaged groups in a society can mobilize for change, occupy new roles in the economy and in the community, pressure for legal and institutional reforms, and mount political campaigns at the national and local level for legitimate inclusion. Women revitalized themselves during that time and took all the initiatives to maintain peace, stability & security in the minds of people. The post-colonial period in the history of Rwanda is therefore not only a time of confused mourning, but is potentially one of planned renaissance, when a conscious decision is made in the minds of people to reconcile and move forward. It can be described as the
time of social and political innovation, in which governance takes on more benign, transparent and accountable face. Rwanda has become known throughout the world for its high percentage of women in parliament. Women parliamentarians are among a pioneer generation, challenging traditional gender roles, taking on new responsibility, embracing high profile positions, and advocating for their rights. Like pioneers in other fields, their contributions and achievements are met with heightened scrutiny. In this chapter I have analyzed, the different initiatives taken by Rwandan women, how they conglomerate themselves, unite themselves and motivate themselves for the huge change in their ideology, thinking, and living pattern. How hard they fought against the worst situation during genocide and created the history of development in limited time period. That’s creating a wonderful example before the world. Rwandan women faced the time of separation, potential fragmentation, and alienation, at the same time that it was a period of profound change for women. After the genocide, gender roles in the society have changed; new cultural practices and norms have been acquired by the Rwandans. Women who lost their husbands and children became the head of households and hence they migrated to urban cities searching for jobs to improve their income. This chapter explores the Rwandan gender discourse & explains how women respond, adapt, ignore, redirect, or even subvert such state and party activities and projects intended to shape their behavior, lives, and thoughts. In Pre-genocide Rwandan society, women were bounded by the rituals, custom, traditions and patriarchal society, where women had been only restricted to their household work and had less participation in every sphere of life in economic, social, cultural and political level. In 1994 Genocide took place in Rwanda. Lakhs of people died irrespective of their sex, ethnicity and age due to ethnic conflict. Because of this, the demography of males in Rwanda had gone done and after that woman came out for restructuring and survival of the society. Women took the responsibilities in their own hands. In recent years, it has been argued that violent conflict, which had resulted in major disruptions to demographic changes in gender relations, can also provide new opportunities to articulate debate about gender politics as well as for individual women to live in a different way. Women started doing formal, informal, traditional, non-traditional all kinds of activities for the sustainable development of the society. Males automatically accepted this new role of women. This changed situation opened
the new door for women forever with full freedom, development, and progress. Women came forward with full vigor and proved as the agent of change. After all this happened men in Rwanda also automatically accepted the new rules and regulation in context to gender equality. Women in conflict and post-conflict situations show themselves willing to learn and apply new skills, even in non-traditional areas. From 1997 onwards, women have contributed tremendously, especially on the issue of repatriation rights of refugees and are visible in the many documentary films that are available on this subject. Women massively participated in the national programme of Imidugudu settlement where they provided labour, and for the first time in the history of Rwanda, they were involved in the construction of house roofs. Throughout the entire territory of Rwanda women were seen on building sites, working side by side with men or sometimes women alone tried to cope with the difficult challenges of constructing houses. They are proud due to the fact that every widow now has a house of her own, a toilet and a kitchen. Women often occupy different roles in a foreign culture. A book called ‘Rwanda Women in Business: A profile of Rwandan women’ portrayed women in their versatile roles such as business professionals, executives, travelers, travel agents and planners etc. Women are serving in the executive, legislative and judiciary arms of the government, Women in Reconciliation and Peace Building in Rwanda. In post-genocide era, women have started working as decision makers, administrators, exporters, reporters, nation builders, project managers, NGOs coordinators. Women have also seen in intellectual roles in teachers, academicians, thinkers & philosophers. Women’s contribution to the income generation has been observed to be crucial for the growth of the society ie they have been associated with NGO’s, rehabilitation projects, micro credit institutions and also with informal sectors like handloom and handicrafts items. In response to the precarious economy, women tended to group themselves to secure a land, build houses and formulated in savings and credit clubs and schemes to finance their reestablishment. The numbers of women who are professionally educated have been increasing and they are associated with fields like law, medicine, education & training, the civil bureaucracy, and informal business in production and services. However, the majority of economically active women in Rwanda are in agriculture and livestock rising, in household subsistence economies including handicraft
production and food processing and storage, and in domestic trading and commerce. Rwandan women achieved the unbelievable success in limited time period, in various fields and their role in upliftment of the post-genocide society has been remarkable.

**Socio-Cultural Life of Women in Pre-Genocide Rwanda**

In pre-genocide Rwanda, women’s life was centered on as a domestic care taker of the family typically as mother and wife. She was subordinated and forced to be dependent on her father, husband or sons for the resources and their economic needs. Women had been given subordinate position in patriarchal and patrilineal society during ancient time in Rwanda. The national legislation and cultural practices never mentioned about women and had discriminated women within public arena. Moreover, the women were confined to domestic role within the house, where in she was responsible for producing children and preparing food for them. In pre-genocide Rwanda, women’s life was centered on as a domestic care taker of the family typically as mother and wife (Peace Uwineza and Elizabeth Pearson: 2000). She was subordinated and forced to be dependent on her father, husband or sons for the resources and their economic needs. This had affected her development across all aspects of life. The unequal intra house hold division of labour amongst family members characterized the male domination. Within household, it was found that men have been associated with income generation, while women are assigned with reproductive roles, centered on domestic labour and child care. This difference creates inequality of women’s position in the Rwandan society. Bread winner of the family reserved the right to take decision regarding household economics and maintenance. This practice excluded women to have a role in household economic decision making.

A UNICEF report revealed that the intra house labour allocation has been entirely regulated by husbands in Rwanda (UNICEF Report: 2005). In most of the patriarchal societies, clear gendered division is demarcated along “productive” and “reproductive” lines. Rwandan Girls were confined to duties within domestic domain including cooking, cleaning, washing utensils, collecting firewood, sweeping and weaving, whilst Rwandan boys generally cared for the family animals and helped with the tasks such as cutting firewood and construction work, which were considered to be physically demanding (Elizabeth:2006:.unicef.org/Rwanda.pdf). Moreover,
Rwandan customary law strictly discriminates against woman; she had no right to inherit property even to husband’s belongings after he dies. It is nearly impossible for a woman to reclaim her family property in case all the male members of the family die (Newbury, Catharine and Hannah Baldwin: 2009). This eventually happened during genocide, which apparently reversed the gender roles in Rwandan society. This is particularly tragic when woman is trying to build her life. Traditionally, gender role in Rwandan society were rigidly structured, where male had authority over family affairs. Before genocide, statistics revealed that one fifth of the women were victims of domestic violence in Rwandan male dominating society. There is a Rwandan proverb that states that a woman who has not yet beaten by her husband is not a real woman. Discrimination polices prevented women’s ability to obtain credit. Rwandan culture emphasize on marriage. Married women and man were given special respect and recognition however; it curtailed the women’s independence and subordinated her within patriarchal system of authority. In pre-genocide Rwanda, education for girls did not include formal schooling but rather was focused on preparing her for future role as mothers and wife. In 1980s girls in Rwanda comprised of 45% of total children in primary school, dropping to approximately 10% to 6% in secondary and university levels respectively (Powley, Elizabeth:2005). Girls were often removed from school at the age of puberty to prepare for marriage. Women had no decision making authority in Rwandan society. Abortion was illegal in Rwanda. Accidentally if women conceived without being married, she wasn’t allowed to abort the baby. She had to undergo social stigma and hate from the society.

**Women Transformation in Post Genocide Rwanda**

After the tragic event of genocide, in 1996, 34% of the Rwandan houses were headed by female and approximately 70% of the population was female (Diana Quick: 2000). Women were not only involved in decision making with husbands but also controlled economic intra house decision within the family. Changes in gender norms have not only altered the perception within the house but also within the society. The position of Rwandan women has been strengthening due to these rapid changes. It was observed in 2000 that 57% of total female population produced around 70% of
agricultural output. As the genocide majorly affected the lines of the women (victims of rape and genocide survivors, widows, single parent families, and caretakers of orphans), they assumed the responsibility of stabilizing and rebuilding the nation. In 2009, the population predominantly comprised of women approximately 53% and women belonging to the age group between 15 to 64 accounted for 42% of the total population. Largely 25% of the household were headed by female widows. The majority of representation in Rwandan parliament was occupied by women. Due to this, political commitments and international community support facilitated gender equality in Rwanda’s national development. The government has taken initiatives for making gender sensitization laws, programs and awareness polices that has resulted in a changed perception, which will have far reaching positive effects for societal gender norms and gender equality amongst the future generation. Earlier when it had started men thought that women were rising against them as their competitors, but slowly they realized the positive advantages of these changes. They started being like more understanding and cooperative. Now the girls and boys both have equal rights in every aspect. The kind of work that can be done by a boy can also be done by a girl. The behavioral and attitudinal changes have changed the Rwandan society forever.

**Political Transformation of Women in Rwanda**

The Rwandan women were missing and underrepresented in politics and could not participate in political and administrative debates women couldn’t make any decisions for herself also. The percentage never rose above 17% within local government, there were no female prefects, and only 3.2% sub-prefects were female. Within private sector, only 12-18% employees were women. In the government sector women were majorly presently only in lower ranking and lower paid positions (Powley, Elizabeth, 2003). Consequently, women’s potential for skill acquisition and gaining knowledge of and experience with political authorities’ banks and the commercial sector was hindered. Three female government ministers were appointed in 1992, by which time there were 12 female members of parliament, of a total of 70.29 yet there remained very few women in local leadership positions. Until and during the genocide in 1994, there were still no female prefects or bourgmestres (mayors) 30 and as at 1990,
women represented only 1% of conseillers (leaders at the sector level (Beijing Report 1995:15).

The first Ministry for women came into existence in 1965. However, initially political life was dominated by male only. Even, the woman’s vote was entirely based on their husband’s preference. Till 1985, women constituted only 12% of the parliamentarians and 2% in the diplomatic services. Before 1994, women political participation never rose more than 18%. The third global conference of women was held in Nairobi in 1985, encouraged Rwandans women to establish the first non-government women organization, Reseau des Femmes (RDF). Their initiatives were to identify rural women as priority and encouraged other women to join associations in Rwanda. Agathe Umilingiyimana, a woman who became prime minister in 1993 was one of the leaders to be killed when carnage began. Following the genocide women’s right and support groups began to emerge (Binaifer Nowrojee, Dorthy Q.; Human Rights women’s project, September 1996). Rwandan women in different positions of leadership played critical roles in mobilizing fellow women to live together and to find common solutions to their problems. The initiatives taken by Women Councils, the Ministry of Gender and Women in Development, Forum of Women Parliamentarians’ Establishment of Constitutional Commission in 2000 and different Civil Societies & Umbrella Organization has been effective in upliftment of Rwandan women and also contributed in changing the life of women in Rwanda. Earlier, Rwanda civil code was discriminatory to women, according to article 83 the legal residence of a woman is her husband’s place. An article 206 authorizes the husband to be the head of the family, of which he is a member together with wife and the children. An article 354 stated that in case of discord, father’s decision prevails in parental authority. The Rwandan penal code discriminates in regard to imprisonment for adultery; the penalty is only one year to six month for husband, while it is one year fixed for the wife. Women were faced many taboos related with the culture and tradition of Rwanda that she was not supposed to involved in cattle milking, cutting of firewood work and decision making authority regarding farm house management and economic activities.
Suddenly after 1994 genocide, the demographic change in Rwandan has got a huge ‘U’ turn for women. Women came out forward for reconstruction out of necessity. After genocide, women started participating and starting taking initiatives in different political activities. The urgent need of Rwanda amends the constitution in favor of women. The transformatory phase began in 1999 when the inheritance and martial property law gave women and their daughters the right to inherit property from their husbands and father. According to the new constitution of 2003, article 29 stipulates that every person has a right to private property, whether personal or owned in association with others. Private property, whether individually or collectively owned, is inviolable. The right to property may not be interfered with except in public interest, in circumstances and procedures determined by law and subject to fair and prior compensation. But in reality, Rwandan women need to do lot of struggle for achieving the equality status of property right. Many rural women and uneducated Rwandans are still unaware of their rights. Article 16 stated that all human beings are equal before the law. They shall enjoy, without any discrimination, equal protection of the law. Different women friendly laws have taken the important position in new amended constitution in 2003. For example Article 8 of the Rwandan constitution has given a provision of suffrage is universal and equal for all Rwandan citizens. All Rwandan citizens of both sexes who fulfill the requirement provided for by the law have the right to vote and to be elected with discrimination. Article 37 stated that every person has the right to free choice of employment. Persons with the same competence and ability have a right to equal pay for work without discrimination. The State of Rwanda commits itself that women are granted at least 30 percent of posts in decision making organs’ (Constitution, Article 9 [4]). Article 9 of the Rwanda Constitution expresses, as a fundamental principle, the need for equality of all Rwandans and particularly between women and men, in a pluralistic democratic government. Rwanda adopted a new constitution in June 2003 in a special national referendum. The constitution reserved 30 percent of seats in the lower house of parliament for women. Article 76 states: The chamber of deputies is composed of eighty members consisting of:……twenty four members of the female sex with two per province and the city of Kigali elected by the councils of districts, of cities, and of the city of Kigali, to which are added the executive committees of the women’s
organizations at the level of the province, city of Kigali, districts, and sectors (Rwandan constitution: 2003). Two seats were reserved for members elected by the national youth council, and one was reserved for a member elected by the federation of associations of handicapped. The rise in women’s participation cannot be attributed to quotas alone, because the number of women in no reserved elected seats has also increased dramatically. For example, the percentage of women elected to cell-level council in 1999 before quotas were in effect was 13.7 percent. The quota system guaranteed 14.3 percent seats to women in 2001 election but surprisingly women gain double i.e. 27 percent seat in the same election. Similarly, the constitutional quota for the chamber of deputies guaranteed women 30 percent of seats, but in the end women won 48.8 percent of the seats in the 2003 parliamentary elections. Furthermore, women have gained strong representation in elections where no quotas were involved, as in the election of Gacaca judges, where women won 35 percent of seats.

**The Chamber of Deputies**

The lower house of the Rwandan Parliament is the Chambre des Députés (Chamber of Deputies). There are 80 members serving five-year terms, 53 of whom are directly elected by a proportional representation (PR) system. The additional seats are contested as follows: 24 deputies (30 percent) are elected by women from each province and the capital city, Kigali; two are elected by the National Youth Council; and one is elected by the Federation of the Associations of the Disabled. The 24 seats that are reserved for women are contested in women-only elections, that is, only women can stand for election and only women can vote. The election for the women’s seats was coordinated by the national system of women’s councils and took place in the same week as the general election in September 2003. Notably, in addition to the 24 reserved seats in the Chamber of Deputies, the elections saw an additional 15 women elected in openly competed seats. Women thus had in total 39 out of 80 seats, or 48.8 percent. In Rwanda, 51 percent of parliamentarians are women – the highest level of women’s representation in the world. Women contesting in Rwanda’s second parliamentary elections since the 1994 Genocide, held on 15–18 September 2008, have secured 45 out of 80 seats, or 56.25 percent, making the incoming Parliament the
first in the world to have women in the majority. The biggest winners in 2008 election are the country's women, who preliminary results show will outnumber men in Rwanda's new Parliament. This is the first time in world history in which women have ever outnumbered men in a national legislative body. In Rwanda's unique electoral system, 53 of the 80 members of the Chamber of Deputies are directly elected, while the remaining 27 members are indirectly elected. Of those 27 indirectly-elected members, the constitution stipulates that 24 must be women. Preliminary election results indicate that women won 20 of the 53 directly elected seats contested in Monday's election, which, combined with the 24 women indirectly elected via local bodies, brings the total number of women in Parliament to 44. (Election Guide:2008). Although women in Rwanda still faced challenges of domestic violence and sexual abuse especially in rural areas, but still they are now ready to change the entrenched patriarchal structure of Rwanda. Laws are always there to support women in Rwanda, but only doubt lies with the awareness and willingness to use. Sometime illiteracy, ignorance, distrusts and confrontations made the political way difficult for women. For that matter, urban and educated women are start supporting to rural women. Women in high political positions should make laws based on affirmative action’s for rural women in Rwanda. A balancing and well coordinating effort can make wonders for Rwandan women.

**Economic Transformation of Women in Rwanda**

According to The World Development Report 2012 on Gender Equality and Development Report, Gender equality matters for development—it is smart economics. Gender equality matters also as an instrument for development. As this Report shows, gender equality is smart economics: it can enhance economic efficiency and improve other development outcomes in three ways. First, removing barriers that prevent women from having the same access as men to education, economic opportunities, and productive inputs can generate broad productivity gains—gains all the more important in a more competitive and globalized world. Second, improving women’s absolute and relative status feeds many other development outcomes, including those for their children. Third, leveling the playing
field—where women and men have equal chances to become socially and politically active, make decisions, and shape policies—is likely to lead over time to more representative, and more inclusive, institutions and policy choices and thus to a better development path. Consider each in turn (World Development Report: 2012).

The three aspects of gender equality which have been mentioned in world development report 2012 for gender equality is already well implemented by Rwandan women. They are competitive to economically self reliant. They are equally involved in all the decision at social, political and economic levels in the society. Apart from this, they have achieved most of MDGs and national development in context to gender equality. In Rwanda changes have already came in this context. Women have already transformed their life and have faith, belief and commitments regarding this report. Rwandan women play an important role in nurturing Rwanda economic society. When Rwandan women earn money, it goes for the betterment of health, nutrition and education for the progress of children, families and communities. Some of the important statistics has shown the relevant position occupied women in Rwandan economy. According to the International Finance Corporation (IFC) report published in October 2008, titled “Voices of Women Entrepreneurs in Rwanda”, Women entrepreneurs are a significant force in Rwanda’s private sector, heading 42 per cent of enterprises. They comprise 58 per cent of enterprises in the informal sector, which accounts for 30 per cent of GDP. The majority are engaged in the retail sector (82 per cent), with the rest focusing on services (16 to 17 per cent) and manufacturing (1 to 2 per cent) sectors. Women entrepreneurs are increasingly able to secure bank loans and purchase or inherit land.

An informal survey found that Rwandan women were less likely to register their business for tax purposes; 22.3 per cent of businesses represented by women declared their businesses compared to 27.6 per cent of businesses represented by men. Data also indicates that women’s share of business ownership decreases as the degree of formalization increases. While women own 58 per cent of informal enterprises, they own only 40 per cent of partially formal or formal enterprises. Through the formulation of a national policy in 2004 that strengthens women’s participation, Rwanda has seen the flourishing of more than three hundred cooperatives. According
According to the National Institute of Statistics of Rwanda in 2011, Rwanda’s women population constituted 5,534,874 and men population is 5,383,371. According to International Finance Corporation (IFC) Report December 2008, the country has 42 percent of enterprises headed by women. According to the New Times newspaper 58 percent of women employed in informal industries in Rwanda (The New Times: 2 December, 2008). According to Fred Ndol in her article ‘Be confident: Inyumba Adviser Home’ she wrote “women constitute 52 percent of Rwandan population 60 percent of the country’s revenues come from rural women through their agricultural activities, according to the government. In another article ‘The incredible women of Rwanda: Females take the Reins’ Alex Galla Brown insists on economic contribution of women in Rwandan economy. She wrote “coffee cultivation and basket weaving are the two industries especially where women have taken the reins in Rwanda, often working efficiently and productivity than their male counterparts. She also focused on currently women own 41 percent of all business in Rwanda, 49 percent of shops in Kigali ((Tusker Geografica:1 January 2011, vol7, issue.1).

According to the Government of Rwanda (2002), “Rwandan women participate in subsistence farming more than men. They represent 54% of the 8.5 million populations, and most of them live in rural areas. Women, the majority living in poverty, head 35% of all households( Rwandan government statistics:2002) .Women represent the majority of the adult working population and are vital to agricultural development, economic development and reconstruction of the country: Women now shoulder a greater burden of economic activity in Rwanda. Consequently, rural women are the main agents of reconstruction in Rwanda today. There is no doubt that they are the crucial partners in the fight against hunger and poverty, now and in the foreseeable future. Therefore, it is very important any consideration of Rwanda's future must take into account the special needs of rural women and their contribution to fighting hunger and poverty” (Government of Rwanda, 2002). These days’ women can be board of governors, micro insurance officers, emerging leaders, strategic partners, technology scientists. Today, women outnumber men in Rwanda . There are more women in Rwanda’s parliament than any other country in the world. Laws have been passed so they can own land and wives can legally keep their assets separate
from their husbands. All steps the government is taking to help Rwandese women gain an equal hand at politics and business. The key is that women are “thinking like entrepreneurs” now and are not content to sit on the sidelines. In Opportunity’s microfinance bank in Rwanda, 91% of our loan clients are women.

Slowly but surely, the lives of Rwandan rural and urban women are changing. In Rwanda, we can easily find women working in every economic corner of the society in both formal and informal sectors. Rwandan women have got international recognition through basket weaving in Rwanda. Traditionally, basket weaving has been male dominating trade since history of Rwandan trade, but now though these profession Rwandan women are doing a business as well as a kind of social network among themselves. A female basket weaver can easily earn between 25,000 and 40,000 Rwandan francs on monthly basis. The Rwanda has the third highest percentage of women entrepreneurs of any country in Africa continent. Forty one percent of businesses are run by women only. Now basket weaving traditions have became the international level trade which supports thousands of Rwandan women. Gahaya links has organized the women weavers into cooperative and training centers. Basket woven by the Gahaya links weavers are now number one export out of Rwanda. In addition to this the government polices and laws are also supporting Rwandan women.

The Ministry of Public Services and Labor (MIFOTRA) of Rwanda has drafted a new law of pregnant and breast-feeding women to give safe working conditions in the work place. It also safeguards women from discriminating practices in which were paid less than their counterparts and were given priority in the hiring process. The project promoting opportunities for Women’s Empowerment in Rwanda (POWER) aims to improve women’s socio-economic conditions in decision making through easy access and control of financial resources. This project will also strengthen the institutional and organizational capacities of local implementing partners for advocacy for women’s interest. The 2005 Land law provides equal access and ownership of land and currently the process of land administration will facilitate an increased access to financial services using land titles as stated in the law, especially for women. The establishment of Women Chamber for entrepreneurship under Private
Sector Federation enhanced skills, support and access to business opportunity for women. The Government of Rwanda through its Central Bank established a Guarantee Fund: The women credit fund facilitated women’s access to small credits which allowed a vast majority of women to work with micro-financing institutions. The use of the guarantee fund and credit fund allowed women’s access to and control over economic financial resources which facilitated them to do business and bring a progressive shift from economic dependence to men. Another Initiative taken by Government of Rwanda to Building productive capacities: Creation of Women’s Entrepreneur’s Banks. Establishing a savings and credit “Banque Populaire” affiliated to the “Union des Banques Populaires” by the Associations of Women Entrepreneurs in Rwanda; establishing a saving and micro-credit cooperative (COOPEDU) by a women’s association, DUTERIMBERE (NGO promoting Women’s Economic Empowerment); land consolidation. This has positively impacted not only on individual women’s lives but also on that of their households, community, and national economy, and has increased the number of businesses owned by women.

The Ministry of Trade and Industry has supported the creation farmers cooperatives i.e. potatoes farming cooperatives, rice farming cooperatives for mainly economic development. Those cooperatives have improved the production due to modern farming and use of fertilizers. Women occupy key positions and actively participate in decision making of the cooperatives. More importantly, members of cooperatives working as group of producers and sellers have so much influenced the prices of their products both at local and regional levels and this has significantly improved both their economic situation and relations between them and their men colleagues. According to Aimable Twahirwa and Kudzai Makombe, “Women comprise 54 percent of Rwanda's population of nine million. Although there are no statistics available for women-owned businesses, the Rwandan government acknowledges that the majority of employees in both the formal and informal sectors are women.

At the time, the Central Bank reported that 6,568 women had benefitted from the credit scheme, drawing loans from $900,000 provided by government, international donors and NGOs. For strengthening the economy as a whole, Government also plans
to use the business registration scheme to develop a database of business activities that will contribute to economic planning. A key Rwanda government target under its economic roadmap, Vision 2020, is to reduce the country’s dependency on aid by increasing tax revenue. When the Foreign Investment Advisory Service, a joint service of the International Finance Corporation and the World Bank, assessed Rwanda in 2005, the country’s 400 large firms and 3,000 registered small enterprises were hugely outnumbered by the estimated 900,000 firms in the informal sector. Registering these firms is one of the avenues government is using to boost the tax base” (Aimable Twahirwa and Kudzai Makombe:2010).

The Rwanda central bank has established a mechanism of micro loans for all financial institutions that lend to female entrepreneurs. Loans for projects declared viable are against collateral guarantees, to be paid back over a long period. Since the establishment of this new credit scheme early this year, at least 6,568 women have received assistance for micro- and small enterprises from the government, international donors and NGOs worth 890,000 U.S. dollars, according to the central bank. The government has also begun a training scheme to educate women on how they can access loans for economic empowerment. Women started small activities for their economic securities in Rwanda like some form of processing activities, such as dairy, fruit and vegetable products. By getting engaged in different activities women started knowing each other and sharing their business experiences and problems in ethnically mixed groups, women became aware of the need to reconcile efforts to strengthen their self-help initiatives and networks in the communities.

**Rwandan Women and Agricultural Transformation**

Rwanda is a poor rural based economy. Ninety percent of the population is engaged in agriculture and some mineral and agro-processing. In pre-genocide Rwanda, women were bound by cultural barriers. Women were considered to be second class citizen in the economic arena. Women were bound by a commercial code which stated that women could not engage in commercial activities without the express authorization of her husband. The male dominating Rwandan farming tradition has been transformed through necessity. Rwandan women generally started growing beans, bananas, local
greens, sweet potato, cassava and trees for their survival. Beans are the great source of proteins; Rwandans grow at an average of 60 kilos of beans a year, the highest in the world. A training initiated in Rwanda called ‘the Farmer of the Future Initiative (FOFI) to empower young girls in primary school curriculum, so that both male and female producers have equal access to seed, tools, animals, small stock and training for sustainable agricultural growth in future. Rwandan women now considered as a bean specialists. She took all the responsibilities for bean crop, seed selection, weeding, sowing and harvesting. The presence of women farmers in farming research centers as evaluators have brought revolutionary change in the society. The Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA’s) work in Rwanda is strongly support of government programs to transform the gendered agricultural system. AGRA also provides well targeted subsidies, access to good seed, fertilizers and credit schemes for Rwandan women. In Rwanda, women are now self aware and self sustain in growing plants especially beans for their family, creating the concept of kitchen garden in every house especially for pregnant ladies nutrition. Now days female farmers have equal access to seeds, tools, animals, small stock and productivity inputs which are essential for setting the for equitable and sustainable agricultural growth.

More than 60 percent of students in Rwanda doing agricultural training in gardening instead going for secondary school or university (Rwandan government statistics: 2010). By passing these farmers skills to younger generation Rwandan women are securing their children future and self sufficiency for food in their country. In this way we can see the eco-friendly caring nature and their love for earth in Rwanda. Women need to be trained in specific areas for the betterment of the Rwandan farmers: agricultural research institutes, Data collection, analysis, land productivity, returns to labour, production , agro-processing, agricultural research, post-harvest processing and storage are need to be focus extensibility. Rural credit and extension schemes, competitive marketing, distribution and storage system, farm information. The agriculture sector is very crucial to national development. Research indicates that women’s income do not correspond to the amount of time invested.
According to a survey carried out by NISR in 2008, whereas women perform the bulk of agricultural tasks, they have no control over revenues from crop sales and key farm inputs, extension services and rural development loans. According to the Theonestine Nyiramahoro, the head of coffee growers in Kirehe, noted that women do not have a say on sales or what to plant. “Men own land, they decide which crops to grow; they have access to information about training or any opportunities for farmers, but women do not have such access”, Nyiramaahoro said. The training was organized by the gender Monitoring office, under a new responsive program of gender and democratic governance with support from UN women (The New Times: July 2011). Different Economic sustainability projects in Rwanda are: Basket weaving is an old tradition which is the biggest source of stability and development for Rwanda.

**Judicial Transformation of Women in Rwanda**

Women are often among the first to call for an end to conflict & war and to strive for order and reconciliation. In Rwanda, women have been taking initiatives for immense peace and reconstruction since last eight years. Women are doing reconciliation formally, informally, individually and collectively in all possible manners. Reconciliation in Rwanda is required for integrating physical, social, moral tissues of the nation. Immediately after the genocide war, women started a campaign of convincing their husbands and relatives to disassociate themselves from the insurgency and return back peacefully to their families. Women used their leadership heroism for initiating different negotiating methods and tactics to convince the rebels to leave the insurgency. They also motivated rebellions for peaceful surrender. Different women organization and umbrella organization took the responsibility for facing the challenges, solving the problems, for medical casualties, consoling old-aged war survivors, looking after orphan children. Women organizations also organized psychological counseling, healing and reconciliation workshops for both victims and perpetrators.

The other initiatives taken in this direction are: The Nkundabana Initiative for Psychological Support (NIPS), Polyclinic of Hope- a project of Rwanda Women
Network (RWN), The National Unity and Reconciliation Commission (NURC). At present 41% of women comprise of judges, including the president in Rwandan Supreme Court. Rwandan new constitution and its chapter 4, article 179 stated that there is a provision for the national commission for the fight against genocide shall be in an independent national organ. Sub-section 2 of the special courts, unit A talks about Gacaca courts and the national service for the follow-up of their activities. Rwandan constitution has made the provision of special courts. Article 152 deals with the Courts are responsible for trial and judgment of cases against persons accused of the crime of genocide and crimes against humanity. A law shall establish a national service charged with the follow-up, supervision and coordination of activities of the Gacaca courts.

Rwanda has managed to move forward in part by adopting what is called the Gacaca process, a traditional, pre-colonial system of justice. In traditional Rwandan culture, women were not allowed to speak in public, so it difficult for women to participate in Gacaca proceedings. Gacaca was introduced in Rwanda for social reconciliation and to involve everyone in the community. Government has made every possible effort to educate people about this process. The Gacaca court in Rwanda is the messenger of change and transformation in Rwanda’s women’s life. They have introduced in Rwanda for speed up the trials and make the prisons empty and involving community participation in establishing truth and promoting reconciliation. The national representation of women in all these courts is 29 % and this is an important achievement as traditionally women did not serve as Gacaca judges, a position that was reserved for a community’s wise and respected men (inyangamugayo) (John Mutamba, and Jeanne Izabiliza: 2005).

In areas where women are presidents of Gacaca courts, such courts have been found to be performing better. Earlier Relatively few women were elected, varying from one-third of all judges at cell level to only one-fifth at the provincial level. There is concern that women may also be neglected during discussions about restitution and compensation, contrary to the law. As a consequence of their precarious economic situation, widows are particularly vulnerable to family and social pressure. Given the
prevalence of social taboos, the horrific sexual crimes suffered by many of these women are likely to go undiscussed. The absence of trauma counseling; the fact that a fixed representation of women on the gacaca benches was not accepted; and the generally weak position of women in Rwandan society are all cause for concern.

On the other hand, now women’s groups, often made up of widows, have sprung up all across the territory, and they may well act as strong new voices. Earlier women were not supposed to participate in any of the judicial process, but now women’s entry in different levels (judges, public prosecutor,) in judicial position is the remarkable achievement in women of empowerment and judicial transformation for gender equality in Rwanda. The Rwandan political and judicial system have recognized immense established faith and belief in the report on progress of the world’s women in pursuit of justice 2011-12, UN Women-United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women) idea’s of Implemented gender sensitive law reforms and put gender equality at the heart of MDGs & invest in women’s access to justice.

Rwandan’s Gender Transformation Through Millennium Development Goals

“World’s development report 2012-Gender Equality and development-Progress of the world’s report, with its focus on justice, is being published in the first year of the life of UN Women. The international community set up this important new agency in affirmation of a simple fact: achieving women equally is a fundamental human right and a social and economic imperative. Justice is central to the effort to help women become equal partners in decision making and development. Without justice, women are disenfranchised, disempowered and denied their rightful place, but in sound legal and justice system, women can flourish and contribute to the advancement of society as a whole, including by helping to improve those very same system for future generations – daughters and sons”----Ban Ki- Moon, Secretary General of the United Nations.
“Gender refers to the social, behavioral, and cultural attributes, expectations, and norms associated with being a woman or a man. Gender equality refers to how these aspects determine how women and men relate to each other and to the resulting differences in power between them” - World Development Report 2012 on Gender Equality. Rwandan women deserve a round of applause and appreciation for their achievements in establishment of gender equality and nation development.

The Rwandan preamble of the 2003 constitution states a commitment to ‘ensuring equal rights between Rwandans and between women and men without prejudice to the principles of gender equality and complementarity in national development’. The Rwanda in belief of the ideas and principles of the Beijing platform for action, Rwandan constitution adopted the ministry for gender issues, the forum of Rwandan women parliamentarian (gender desk in parliament), the national facilitation initiatives on the plat for action and the newly formed gender unit in the legal and constitutional committees are structures for the promotion of gender equality in different sectors. The Rwandan constitution, title IX talks about introduction of national council of women in Rwanda. Chapter 9, article 185 speaks about establishment of a gender monitoring office. The Rwandan women also have faith, belief and commitment in International Convention on Eradication of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW); Resolution 1325 of the UN Security Council, which advocates for the role of women; in peace agreement negotiations; Millennium Development Goals [MDGs]. During the period of transitional government of 1994-2003, a new gender-sensitive constitution was adopted. The government was also created a ministry of gender and women in development (MIGEPROFE) which will help in establishing gender equality in the country. The women’s council’s are the other achievement in regard to decentralization of grassroot participation. Rwanda’s parliament also formed a women based cross-party caucus, the forum of women parliamentarian, who represent political parties and those who were elected on the ‘women ballot’ are the members of the organization. Their work focused on issues across party line and women empowerment.
In July 2009, government established the Women Fund, a credit scheme for women in Rwanda. Gender responsive planning budgeting is an important accountability tool that helps in bridging the gap between policies and concrete actions including accounting for commitments towards gender equality and women empowerment. On July 2011, Rwanda hosted a two day high level global meeting on Gender Responsive Budgeting (GRB). The meeting was jointly organized by Rwandan government, Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning (MINECOFIN), United Nations entity for gender equality and the empowerment of women and European Union. The high level meeting has drawn 100 representatives attention on gender responsive budgeting. The main objective of the meeting was to present a strong evidence-based of good practice on GRB in order to demonstrate how it can be used as a government standards for transparency and accountability and how it links policy commitments to financing on gender equality and women’s rights. Shawn Phillips a social activist from united nations said that “Rwanda has illustrated its commitment to promotion of gender equality for sustainable development through several international agreements including the MDGs, which includes several indicators related to gender, the convention on elimination of all discrimination against women adopted in 1979 and other protocols”(Shawn Phillips: USAID).

By the year 2015, UN member states have pledged to meet eight goals. No other countries accept Rwanda achieved and showed the highest level of progress in human development in special context to gender equality. Gender equality is the key for achieving the other seven millennium goals. Rwandan represents the unique case in highest participation of women in legislature in the world. It is the greatest achievement for Rwandan women and gender equality. According to UN Report, women parliamentarians have make different polices and laws for women’s economic freedom and inheritance rights as well as pass domestic violence and marital rape laws for protection of women. Notably, Rwanda is one among the 52 countries that have that criminalizes marital rape.

The United Nations Secretary General Mr Ban Ki-moon paid an official visit to Rwanda on the 29th January 2008. In his address to the parliament he commended
Rwanda for its achievements in meeting the Millennium Development Goals. The Secretary General particularly stressed—“The achievements on Goal 3; promoting gender equality and empowering women. In education, Rwanda has already achieved gender parity in primary school enrolment. In health, there has been a 30 per cent drop in the maternal mortality rate between 2000 and 2005. In economic security, legal reforms have been passed to enable both women and men to inherit land. "Women now comprise 43 per cent of elected local government leaders, and hold close to half the seats in parliament. With this Rwanda offers an outstanding example, not only to other African countries, but to the entire world, he said. The secretary General also highlighted the importance of political diversity and encouraged the Government to work for to work for broad-based participation of political parties, civil society, and media organizations in the legislative elections process later this year”.

Women are the modern decision makers in Rwanda. They are nation builders. It was nearly an impossible task to rebuild Rwanda in post genocide period however woman achieved most of the MDGs for Rwanda and rebuild it as a strong and gender equality based country. According to the data available with Dept of International Development on 14 May, 2010, Rwanda has come very close to the set target of MDGs

**MDG 1: Eradicate Extreme Poverty and Hunger:**
A combination of adequate rainfall and government focus on agriculture has resulted in improved agricultural performance. Women have majorly contributed to domestic agriculture in Rwanda. Poverty rate has been observed to be reduced from 70% in 1994 to 57% in 2006-07 majorly due to agricultural growth (National Institute of Statistics of Rwanda: 2007)

**MDG 2: Achieve Universal Primary Education:**
Rwanda is well on track to achieve universal primary education, with 94% enrolment rate for both boys and girls. There has been tremendous increase in number of children attending primary school. The rate of total literate population in Rwanda has
increased from 57.9 in 1991 to 70% in 2007. According to the recent data available 87.6% of total children population is going to school in primary level and there is no gender discrimination in this regard (National Institute of Statistics of Rwanda:2007)

**MDG 3: Promote Gender Equality and Empower Women:**
Rwandan government has implemented various laws & policies in context to decision making roles to ensure gender equality and women empowerment in Rwanda. As far as education sector is concerned, gender enrolment parity and gender parity in literacy rate have been well achieved. The government policy has reserved 30% seats for women political participation in Rwandan parliament. Consequently Rwandan women hold 56% of seats in Rwanda’s parliament, which is highest percentage in any country across the world. (Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), 1995. Women in Parliaments 1945–1995: A World Statistical Survey. Geneva: IPU)

**MDG 4: Reduce Child Mortality:**
There has been steady improvement in health indicators in Rwanda, the child mortality rate has fallen from 86 per 1000 live births 2005 to 62% per 1000 in 2008 (Dept of International Development: 2010)

**MDG 5: Improve Maternal Health:**
Maternal health has greatly improved due to modern contraceptive, medical facilities and assistive deliveries. The women are majorly playing an important role as doctors, trained nurses and other hospital staff. This change has reduced the maternal mortality rate from 1071 per 1, 00, 00 live birth in 2000, to only 383 per 1, 00, 00 live birth in 2010 (Rwanda Demographic and Health Survey 2005’, Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning, Kigali, July 2010). Though this speedy improvement Rwanda will definitely achievement the set target of improving maternal health soon.

**MDG 6: Combat HIV/AIDS, Malaria and other Diseases:**
The modern health facilities and awareness campaigns focused on young people has reduced HIV prevalence rate from 13.9% in 2000 to 3.5% in 2005. (Rwanda
Goal 7: Ensure Environmental Sustainability:
Women contribute to sustainable agricultural practices like kitchen gardening and harvesting the fields. Women plays major role in economic stability and independence. There is various sustainability practices like Orphan’s bee-keeping and honey farm project, Urunana pineapple plantation project in Ruhuha, Wirira widow’s corn grinder and sales shop project, Animals for impoverished families project, income generation projects such as Rwanda village concept project, Bristol volunteer Development Abroad (BVDA), Bee keeping project, coffee growing project in Huye district, Sustainable access to financial services for investment project (SAFI), Community based livelihood enhancement project (CLE), Community learning and action for saving stimulation and enhancement project. Trees for the future project, Gisenyi land and environment rehabilitation project (GLER), Rwanda solid waste collection and biomass recycling project, Community –assisted access to sustainable energy project (CASE), the Norwegian People’s aid funding project for Rwandan widows. Undoubtedly women have been a major contributor towards achieving economic as well as environmental sustainability in Rwanda.

MDG 8: Develop a Global Partnership for Development:
Rwanda’s government which is majorly constitutes by women has been able to build a culture of governance and management. It has constructed and strengthened the global partnership for development especially with their basket weaving tradition. Strong macro economic performance during post war recovery period has enabled Rwanda to reach the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) completion point in April 2005, and qualify for the Multilateral Debt Relief Initiative (MDRI) in June 2005, thus benefiting from a substantial debt relief. The deadline for achievement of
MDGs has been given as 2015; however Rwanda has shown tremendous development in all these years and is not too far away to achieve MDGs very soon.

**Women Participation in Different Umbrella Organizations**

In the 1980s and early 1990s Rwandan women formed numerous organizations other than political affiliations. Civil society organizations came into existence out of the social and economic needs of Rwandan women. Women who driven by economic necessity were the primary force behind the development of Rwandan civil society organizations. Being associated with civil society organizations Rwandan women conglomerate themselves, plan, identify, implement, and monitor different activities of development for progress at especially regional level. The primary activities of women’s group after the genocide were as providing shelter, assistance to the widows and orphans children, supporting income-generation activities, providing health facilities and psychotherapy and the various political tasks by these groups are focused on providing civic training and defending women’s rights all across Rwanda. Different women’s organizations working successfully at regional level in Rwanda are: Imbuto Foundation (for health, education, and economic empowerment), Organization of African First Ladies against HIV/AIDS (OAFLA), Pro- Femmes, Twese Hamwe (Partnership with different organizations), Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE), Women For Women International, Haguruka, The Association for Women’s Right in Development (AWID), Tubahumurize (empower socially, economically marginalized women in Rwanda), the Association of Widows of the Genocide, AVEGA, Agahozo, Pyramid Project (for gender equality). National level projects includes The Great Lake Advocacy Group (GLAG) comprises CARE Burundi, CARE DRC, CARE Rwanda, and Uganda (for gender conflict issues). These days, the civil society organizations have increased contact with grassroots organization and communities. The civil society organizations are framing new polices for better coordination for solving the problems of rural women. The CSOs capacity building activities facilitated through training workshops on wide range of needs, like project management cycle, financial management, reporting, leadership, networking, micro-credit schemes, gender concerns, environmental protection,
agricultural techniques and framing systems, revenue generating activities, processing and marketing of local products. Women’s legal organizations are now at the forefront for justice and for legal empowerment for women. Women’s organizations have also spearheaded law reform efforts and strategic policy making that have transformed the landscape for women’s rights nationally and regionally in Rwanda. These law reforms, including those on violence against women, sexual and reproductive health, citizenship and inheritance. Support of these organizations is an urgent priority and a vital investment to increase women’s access to justice in Rwanda.

The Government of Rwanda put in place various institutional mechanisms aimed at promoting gender. The Ministry of Gender and Family Promotion (MIGEPROF) is responsible for promoting gender equality and equity, children’s rights and family promotion. MIGEPROF developed a National Gender Policy to give the orientation on how to mainstream gender in the priority areas of the country. Among the areas covered include the twelve areas identified in the Beijing Platform for action. Based on June 2003 Constitution, the National Women Council (NWC) was given the mandate to mobilise women and to identify their needs and their constraints to be taken into consideration in development processes. The Beijing Secretariat deals with the monitoring of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action. The Secretariat serves under the National Coordinating Committee that is headed by the Minister in the Prime Minister’s office in charge of gender and family promotion.

The Forum for Rwandan Women Parliamentarians is another mechanism that was established under the initiative of women’s parliamentarians. It has the mission to promote gender equality, contribute in capacity building for women in decision-making. It is mostly involved in laws and budget. The gender observatory as a mechanism to monitor the implementation of gender sensitive indicators and give recommendations for gender mainstreaming to various bodies is provided in the Constitution under Article 185. Gender Observatory has the mandate to hold accountable, with respect to gender issues, the various interveners both at public, private sector, civil society and donor community levels. Human rights organizations
are also part of the mechanisms that Rwanda Government is encouraging and majority of them are grouped into two main umbrella associations: CLADHO and Pro Femmes/Twese Hamwe. CLADHO specializes in legal matters while Profemmes Twese Hamwe deals with the promotion of women’s rights in general. Pro- Femmes Twese Hamwe has played a very important advocacy role in ensuring that gender is mainstreamed in the Constitution and in the legal reforms aimed at promoting gender equality.

The Government of Rwanda, through the Community Development Policy which has an overarching goal of ensuring effective and sustainable participation of the community wherein men and women are equally represented, analyse their environment, design collective plans to meet their needs and solve their problems in a prioritized manner and implement those plans. HIMO is labour intensive program for rural public works, which was designed to tackle the problem of rural unemployment. It is reported that since 2003 some 10,000 jobs have been created with equal numbers of male and female beneficiaries. The Program has contributed to rural employment and to increased savings, especially among the poor, including women. The right to employment, including the right to free choice of employment is recognized in article 37 of the Rwandan Constitution. The labour code prohibits any form of discrimination likely to result in unequal chances as regards employment and provides for the principle of equality stipulated in the constitution. The law on inheritance, matrimonial regime, succession and liberalities is meant to promote women’s access to and control over properties. Various non-governmental organizations have also invested into training women in various management techniques, including credit and saving. Mechanisms enabling women at the grassroots level to have access to credit and savings have been initiated. Much as these financial mechanisms are facilitating women’s access to credits the latter require solid guarantees, which in most cases women do not have.

Transformation of Rwandan Gender Norms though NGOs

NGOs in Rwanda are the great source of inspiration in human development. It creates a culture of working together and creates economic opportunities for sustainable
development for women in Rwanda. In Rwanda NGOs is the unit of power which provides awareness and transformation among the people of social, economic, and political level. NGOs in Rwanda are supporting not only in the fields of education, health, women empowerment but also in sustainable development in environment, empowering women through civil society, peace and reconciliation work etc. In Rwanda’s different NGOs are working which are as follows: African Enterprise, African Leadership and Reconciliation Ministries (ALARM), African Reconciliation Committee, Amahoro Africa, Catholic Relief Services in Rwanda, Christian Action for Reconciliation and Social Assistance (CARSA), Episcopal Church of Rwanda , Evangelical Prison Ministry Rwanda , National Unity and Reconciliation Commission, National University of Rwanda Center for Conflict Management, Profemme Twese Hamwe, Reach Organization, Rwanda , World Vision Rwanda , International Crisis Group :Rwanda , Forest Peoples Programme Haguruka, Human Rights Watch, IBUKA, Never Again International, International Criminal Tribunal For Rwanda , International Justice Mission, Rwandan Women’s Network. International Organizations, International NGOs, and foreign NGOs working in Rwanda are: Global Policy Forum, Internal Displacement Monitoring Center, International Committee of the Red Cross, United Nations System in Rwanda, UN International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda.

**Transformation in Rwanda’s Education System and Rwandan Women’s Contribution**

On the basis of deep analysis of gender in education in Rwanda we found out that at the primary and secondary levels persistent gender imbalance and gender disparity in retention, transition and completion rates. ( Randell and Huggins 2007; Ministry of Education 2008; FAWE 2008).Some time passing of one class going into another level is the problem with the girls. The number of girl’s student is declining when we study the higher level of schooling. This is because of the socio-cultural practices and post genocide double burden rising on women. We have observed that such gender disparities generally seen in context of higher education which posing serious obstacles to girls’ opportunities to enter Rwandan universities. Small Rwandan girls
are also being denied by any female role models in higher education. Most of the Women faculty members often choose not to continue the studies needed to gain advancement within higher education institutions because they are over burden with responsibilities. This double burden of social responsibility reproduces the gendered nature of higher education institutions, which remain predominantly male, in both the formal classrooms and the broader institutional climate. In Rwanda there are two very famous University institute called, the National University of Rwanda and Kigali Institute of Science and Technology. According to one of the survey done by Ministry of Education Rwanda in the year 2004, the academic staff in National University of Rwanda (UNR) had female staff was 21% as compared to male that was 79%. In Kigali Institute of Science and Technology (KIST) staff was 16% as compared to male that was 84% (Jolly Rubagiza: 2005). The National University of Rwanda was opened in 1963 with 49 students. By the year 1999, the student figure risen to 4,550. In 1997-08 the total enrolled student was 5,571 in higher education and today this stands at 26,796, 39 of them females. Untill now 100 PhD scholar came out with true flying colors with majority of the research in agriculture, livestock, and farm management. In 2000-01 success rate of passing graduation was between 11 and 50% and after few years it was changed into from 53 to 76%. www.scribd.com/doc/15739301/Education-in-Rwanda).

Vision 2020 states that Rwanda is committed to reaching ‘Universal Education for All’ which is an important Millennium Development Goal. Investing in the development of human resources in order to meet a major objective of Vision 2020, which is to create a ‘knowledge-based economy’, is therefore a government priority. Vision 2020 also stipulates that major emphasis will be placed on vocational and technical training fields of technology, engineering and management. It is also observed that vocational and technical education will be targeted at secondary school leavers as well as various sections of society (with particular emphasis on youth and women). Vision 2020 therefore sees gender as one of the cross cutting areas that will not only be affected by the economic transformation envisaged but will also play an important role in achieving The Vision’s development goals. In order to achieve gender equality and equity, it is stipulated that Rwanda will continuously update and
adapt its laws on gender, support. Moreover, Rwanda has embarked on efforts to strengthen women skills force. From providing free 9 year basic education, as our means increase, Rwanda have raised it to 12 years, ensuring that soon every Rwandan child will acquire at least secondary school education. Rwanda have also increased universities and tertiary institutions from just 1 university in 1994 to 29 universities by 2010 owned by both the private and public sector - and promoted TVET centers across the country.

The government of Rwanda has also made a number of international commitments that underline its determination to promote Education in general and Girls Education in particular. These include: the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), Education for All and to the Millennium Development Goals (MDG). The convention commits signatories to ensuring that the right of all children to education is realized and Education for All (EFA) and the MDGs have a target of Universal Primary Completion (UPC) and gender equality (in opportunities and outcomes) by 2015. The Government of Rwanda pledges have led to an Education Sector Policy commitment to ensuring that there is Universal Primary Enrolment by 2010 and Basic Education for all by 2015. Rwanda has achieved gender parity in primary education, making it only one of a few African countries to do so and Net Enrolment Rates (NER) in primary schools is now 95.8% for girls and 94.7% for boys. The Rwanda Government efforts to promote gender equality in education are also seen through the budget allocation to the education sector. Total education spending increased by 12% between 2004 and 2005 and on its own accounted for almost half (49%) of total expenditure in 2005. The increase was mainly allocated towards the implementation of the fee-free primary education policy.

In order to promote girls’ education and reverse the waning trend, the non-governmental organization, Forum for African Women Educationalist (FAWE), with government support, has opened a pilot school for girls’ education and institutionalized a class prize for girls who perform for girls who perform very well in examinations. This organization is also a permanent member of the national commission granting scholarships in which it is responsible especially for the
applications of female candidates, the goal being that 50% of scholarships be granted to them. Much as remarkable achievements have been made in the area of girl’s education by Rwanda Government, there is still a need for a deep analysis of reasons behind the poor participation of women in higher levels of public educational institutions whereas it is in the same public institutions that girls/women are the majority in lower levels. For example, there are less women in public universities as compared to the private ones.

Economic Development and Poverty Reduction Strategy (EDPRS), 2008-2012- The EDPRS as a key guiding strategy underscores the need for developing skills for a knowledge-based society if Rwanda is to achieve the structural economic change implied in the targets of Vision 2020. As far as education and skills development are concerned, emphasis has been put on increasing the coverage and quality of nine year basic education, strengthening TVET (for example, increasing the current graduate output of 8,250 to 135,000 by 2012 within TVET is proposed, however, no targets have been set to measure progress in gender parity and equality). It is noted that girls have been well represented in professional/vocational education that focuses mainly on traditional skills such as secretarial skills, agro-veterinary, nursing and teaching, reinforcing further gender stereotypes in careers and professional opportunities. Still, women lag behind in education in Rwanda and will require tremendous and deliberate efforts to fill the gap and attain an equal level with men in education.

The Rwanda Association of University Women (RAUW), a non-governmental organization of women who have earned educational qualifications beyond the secondary school level. RAUW founded in 2006 by women graduates living in Rwanda, to promote the quality of life of women and girls in Rwanda. The Akilah Institute is another institute of higher education focuses on hospitality education that empowers women with the skills, confidence and education. FAWE- Forum for African Women Educationalist (FAWE) founded in 1992, working in over 32 African countries, FAWE’s core mission is to work, together with its partners, to create positive societal attitudes, policies and practices that promote equity for girls in terms of access, retention, performance and education quality, through influencing the
transformation of education systems. Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE) in Rwanda is a Non Governmental Organization. FAWE brings together African women, Ministers of Education, Education officers and decision makers on matters of education. Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE), Rwanda Chapter, is a non-profit membership organization. From November 1997, it brings together people interested in promoting female education in Rwanda. Rwandan schools adopted the Gender-Responsive Pedagogy (GRP) for more gender awareness and gender-sensitive class rooms. The aim of this method to equip teachers with skills and knowledge to enable them to respond adequately to the learning needs of boys and girls. FAWE is also working with teacher training colleges for gender mainstreaming.

Concluding Observations

Now Rwanda has become a country of women. This is an unprecedented transition and transformation in women’s history. It is currently estimated that 70 percent of the population is female and that 50 percent of all household are headed by women. The ethnic conflict have changed the role, responsibilities, priorities of Rwandan women, forcing them into what traditionally were men’s responsibilities and many of them are demonstrating remarkable ability to handle the problems of the aftermath. Beyond ethnicity, there are other values of humanity and family ties, marriage and friendship that are stronger than ethnicity. Rwandan transition needs to amend & apply them into behavioral cultural practices of different laws in favours of women especially in context to property, land, inheritance, marriage, settlement, reproductive rights and child adoption laws. If Rwanda is to progress then men and women alike must join hands as partners to rebuilds it. The government laws and policies should actively encourage this. It can be described as the time of social and political innovation, in which governance takes on more benign, transparent and accountable face. Rwanda has become known throughout the world for its high percentage of women in parliament. Women parliamentarians are among a pioneer generation, challenging traditional gender roles, taking on new responsibility, embracing high profile positions, and advocating for their rights. Like pioneers in other fields, their
contributions and achievements are met with heightened scrutiny. The different initiatives taken by Rwandan women, conglomerate themselves, unite themselves and motivate themselves for the huge change in their ideology, thinking, and living pattern. They fought against the worst situation during genocide and created the history of development in limited time period. That’s creating a wonderful example before the world. Rwandan women faced the time of separation, potential fragmentation, and alienation, at the same time that it was a period of profound change for women. After the genocide, gender roles in the society have changed; new cultural practices and norms have been acquired by the Rwandans. Women who lost their husbands and children became the head of households and hence they migrated to urban cities searching for jobs to improve their income. Women started doing formal, informal, traditional, non-traditional all kinds of activities for the sustainable development of the society. Males automatically accepted this new role of women. This changed situation opened the new door for women forever with full freedom, development, and progress. Women came forward with full vigor and proved as the agent of change. After all this happened men in Rwanda also automatically accepted the new rules and regulation in context to gender equality. Women in conflict and post-conflict situations show themselves willing to learn and apply new skills, even in non-traditional areas. In post-genocide era, women have started working as decision makers, administrators, exporters, reporters, nation builders, project managers, NGOs coordinators. Women have also seen in intellectual roles in teachers, academicians, thinkers & philosophers. Women’s contribution to the income generation has been observed to be crucial for the growth of the society ie they have been associated with NGO’s, rehabilitation projects, micro credit institutions and also with informal sectors like handloom and handicrafts items. In response to the precarious economy, women tended to group themselves to secure a land, build houses and formulated in savings and credit clubs and schemes to finance their reestablishment. The numbers of women who are professionally educated have been increasing and they are associated with fields like law, medicine, education & training, the civil bureaucracy, and informal business in production and services. Rwandan women achieved the unbelievable success in limited time period, in various fields and their role in upliftment of the post-genocide society has been remarkable.
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The Association for Women's Rights in Development (AWID) is an international, feminist, membership organization committed to achieving gender equality, sustainable development and women's human rights. A dynamic network of women and men around the world, AWID members are researchers, academics, students, educators, activists, business people, policy-makers, development practitioners, funders, and more.


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Tubahumurize is an organization with the mission to empower socially and economically marginalized women living in Rwanda. Most are survivors of gender-based violence and oppression, and many are living with HIV/AIDS.


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