Trabajo Fin de Grado

RWANDA'S FEMINISM

A story of gender and class

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1. Finality and Motives

As a fundamental requirement to finalise my bachelor studies in International Relations by the Pontifical University of Comillas, it is required to present a thesis regarding my bachelor's specialisation in International Security and Development. Hence, I have chosen the subject of feminist policies in Rwanda and the repercussion of International development within the feminine sector in the country.

For long time, feminism and gender policies have been excluded from the international academia, in many cases framed as a mere criticism to bigger and more mainstream International Relations theories.

Current times have brought a shy empowerment of these visions as a valuable way of understanding the international panorama and the social dynamics both, nationally and globally. In addition, women's development in the Global South has been subjected to economic and productivity objectives, thus altering the fundamental socio-economic foundations disregarding an effective counterbalance for them. The disruption of this social constructions has been a divisive scholar factor. On the one hand those who see the female empowerment through and overall economic upsurge; on the other, those who emphasises the precarious conditions for women in these countries beyond figures. Rwanda's feminist policies are located in the middle of this debate.

Rwanda has shown in the past two decades a development in feminist policies superior not only to neighbouring countries, but globally. However, the increasing accusations of authoritarianism question the legitimacy of these measures as part of a broader democratic process and subjugates them to thorough examination.

More than ever it is important to analyse these relations and the implications these types of polices may have not only in the figures, but in the life of ordinary female citizens. It is hence to these examinations, that a more equalitarian future can be guaranteed to females internationally.

Since the early stages of my education feminism and gender studies have been a central part of my interests. Furthermore, my experience at the University of Sussex in the department of Development have enable me with a broad consciousness of the importance of dismantling mainstreamed narratives and the impact international cooperation might have in local policies. It is therefore, my intention to combine these two perspectives in the Rwandan feminist government case.

2. Introduction to the topic

Rwanda is a small landlocked country in the Great Lakes region of East Africa. The demographic characteristics of the state do not defer greatly from other neighbouring countries: The population is predominantly young, with half of the citizens below the age of 19 and only 3 percent over 65 years old; in relation to the sex balance, 52% of the population are female (Rwandan Government, 2018). The country ranked 146th poorest in the world (World Bank, 2021). Human capital is low, with 72 per cent of those aged 16 or over having basic literacy skills (77.7 per cent men, 67.4 per cent women) and 36 per cent having completed primary school (39.4 per cent men, 32.9 per cent women) (Republic of Rwanda, 2014). A majority of the population are employed in agriculture, mainly as subsistence farmers.

Nevertheless, Rwanda is perhaps still mostly known for the genocide occurred in 1994 after Hutus and Tutsis confront themselves in a devastating carnage which left a broken state, a divided society and a whole new paradigm for state reconstruction. Now, more than 20 years later, Rwanda has become for many a successful story both in terms of reconciliation and women's rights and empowerment. This part of the thesis aims to provide a brief introduction to Rwanda's political situation in the genocide's aftermath, specially focusing in the gender sensitive approach endorsed by the Rwanda Patriotic Front (RPF) government. In order to do so I will first paint a broad picture of the post-genocide politics and the political climate in Rwanda; secondly, I would define the Gender Sensitive Approach; and finally, I would briefly explain the governmental strategy Vision 2020 and its implications for the female population of the country.

Although determining the causes for the ethnic disparity in Rwanda goes beyond the aim of this thesis, since this distinction would be noted through the analysis, it is important, to mark that, despise the general understanding of Hutus and Tutsis as antagonistic ethnics, this problem aroused from an *ethnicization* by European imperialism of what it was a pre-colonial class distinction (Mamdani, 2001). Hence, to be a Hutu or a Tutsi was intrinsically related to the economic power of individuals, division that is still present nowadays.

The 1994 Genocide and its consequent aftermath has had a severe impact in Rwanda's population. The intrinsic ethnic character and the high levels of popular participation created a scenario that many believed was improbable to be overcome. Not only did it represent a total socio-economic and cultural clash of the entire state, it also presented an enormous challenge for post-conflict reconciliation. The problem did not abide from the victims themselves, which

accounted of more than 80% of the Tutsi population at that time (Herrero, 2005), but the amount of popular participation which involved more than a third of the adult population.

Rwanda is defined nowadays as an example of social reconstruction, nevertheless, the many flaws of the system have put into question the legitimacy of these claims. Theoretically, the Rwandan Political system is considered to be a multi-party system, in reality, power is mainly control by the RPF in what resembles more to a single-party system (Burnet, 2011). Since the end of the 1994 Genocide, the Rwandan Patriotic Front "has monopolized power and eliminated countervailing voices" (Reyntjens, 2011). President Paul Kagame, leader of the of RPF, came to power in 2000, however he previously held the role of Prime Minister been the *de facto* leader of Rwanda for six years (BBC news, 2000). Kagame's arrival to power entangled a series of political reforms which have granted the president and the Prime Minister with further and longer executive power (Turianskyi & Chisiza, 2017)

Furthermore, when in 2000, the OAU commended an International Panel of Eminent Persons or IPEP, it was highlighted that the RPF had committed "large-scale massacres before, during and after the genocide" (International Panel of Eminent Personalities to Investigate the 1994 Genocide in Rwanda and the Surrounding Events, 2000).

The 1994 Genocide was committed from Hutu extremist towards Tutsi and Hutu moderate, however, it is important to address that some Hutus and Tutsis share different views about the causes of, and the responsibility for the 1994 genocide. The RPF have shared a narrative, common to the international interpretation, of victimization in which the focus is on Hutu extremism, born at the longing for revenge and to "limit the economic and political influence of the Tutsi" (Amstutz, 2006). Contrarily, Hutus claimed that the massacres were encouraged by the several attempts of the RPF during the 1990s to overthrow the legitimate government "From the Hutu perspective, the atrocities were a consequence of the Tutsis quest to regain power" (Amstutz, 2006). The reconciliation process, hence, operated on the premise of reconciliation rather than punishment but based on a narrative of Tutsis as *offended* and Hutus as *offenders*. A single story born from the political reconciliation plan of the RPF government which does not recognize the Hutu perspective of a double genocide. This single story has translated into the international agenda in what Reyntjens considers "an extraordinary sense of entitlement" which is enhanced by the "exploitation of international feelings of guilt and ineptitude, and its regional military might allowed it to tackle unsympathetic voices aggressively and with arrogance" (Reyntjens, 2011).

Having said this, it is important to refer to the international context which promoted the post genocide political environment in Rwanda. The international community not only failed

to prevent, manage and stop the conflict, it was incapable of granting a suitable solution in the aftermath of it. The normative Western judiciary institutions are designed to face periodic illegal behaviours. However, the accountability for the Tutsi Genocide ran deeply in the socio-political roots of the country and involved more than a third of the adult population. Furthermore, there was an inherent need for reconciliation that Western justice could not fulfil (Amstutz, 2006).

Moreover, the decade of the 1990s placed the ideas of liberalisation, democratisation and good governance high in the international development agenda. The events happened between April and July 1994 brough an globally extended feeling of guilt and accountability which catalysed Rwanda as an "aid darling" (Marysse, Ansoms, & Cassimon, 2007). Despite I would refer further to the implications that development aid has had in contemporary Rwanda's feminist policies, it is important to remark that "if they sometimes privately agree that some things are going seriously wrong, there is a general consensus to give the [Rwandan] government a smooth ride" (International Crisis Group, 2001).

3. State of the Question

3.1. The gender Sensitive Approach

War is a catalyser of change. Economic, social and political structures change no matter the outcome of a war. Hence, the genocide and the civil war occurred in Rwanda during 1994 set the scenario for a new national paradigm which would have vast consequence for gender relations within the country.

Although Rwanda experimented a modest upsurge of feministic movement previous the genocide which would be discussed further within the thesis, "devastation forced women into new social roles and pushed them to seek aid from organisations and others in their communities" (Berry, 2018). The main gender-related changes that appeared after the war can be divided in three categories:

Firstly, there was a demographic shift. Men constituted 56% of the dead after the violence (De Walque & Verwimp, 2010) whereas 80% of the displaced population were women. This sex imbalance prompted a vacuum for men representation in demographic being the sex ratio in some rural districts 0.592 man per woman (Republic of Rwanda, 2003).

Secondly, this imbalance in sex distribution promoted an economic shift. The classic Rwandan conceptualisation of gender was based on the division of labour (Uwineza, Pearson, & Powley, 2009) being women responsible for agriculture, family care and household duties. The absence of men in the labour force prompted a reconceptualization of these divisions and women started being responsible of culturally male activities within the economy. Furthermore, as previously mentioned, women represented 80% of the displaced population living in refugee camps, international aid was canalised in many cases through these camps what promoted their access to financial aid in several cases (Pavlish, 2011). This economy shift would later imply a re-conception of gender laws and the access to economic means for women.

Lastly, the genocide brought a re-emergence of pre- colonisation gender assumptions. Traditionally, ethnicity in Rwanda whereas Hutu, Tutsi or Twa was passed through patrilinear line (Hiernaux, 1963), hence, women were historically considered to be less ethnic than men. The post genocide reconstruction of Rwanda attempted, at least in theory, to eradicate the ethnic division of the population, consequently, women emerged as more peaceful actors in the post war scenario. As pointed by Selimovic, women were seen as passive victims of the genocide, independently of their implications with the massacre, particularly among Tutsi women. This portrayal served as political tool for the Rwandan government and "should therefore be read as part of a complex, ongoing construction of a grand narrative of war and peace, that is highly dependent on gendered meanings and clogs into an affective memory politics of ethno- nationalism" (Selimovic, 2020).

3.2. Vision 2020 and the Gender Dimension

When talking about Rwanda is necessary to address the uniqueness that represents in the region, not only in terms of female representation but also addressing economic development. By the beginning of the 1990s decade, countries around the world experimented an expansion in their economies as a consequence of the libertarian policies which became the mainstream economic rule after the fall of the Soviet Union. Rwanda and other countries in the Great Lakes region also profited from this enlargement (Marysse, Ansoms, & Cassimon, 2007), however, the 1994 Genocide put an end to economic development. As we can appreciate in the Table 1 Rwanda GDP per capita sank in 1994 only to recover a decade later. The arrival of the RPF to power induced a set of integrated development programs that, together with the increase in Official Development Assistance (ODA) (Table 2), encouraged a transformation in the economy and set the scenario for *Vision 2020*.

GDP per capita [US$], Rwanda
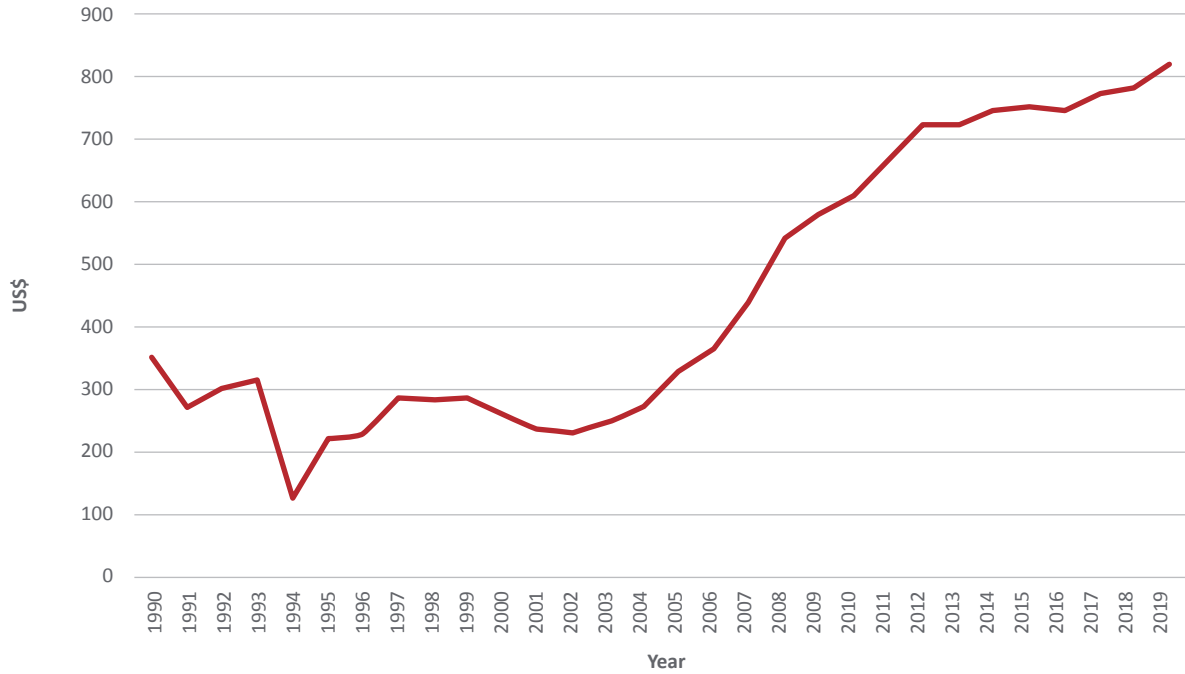
ODA Flows in Rwanda on Million US$

Vision 2020, stablished in 2000, "is a reflection of Rwanda aspirations and determination to construct a united, democratic and inclusive Rwandan identity without discrimination between its citizens" (Nimusima, Karuhanga, & Mukarutesi, 2018). In a less poetic way, *Vision 2020* is a set of economic, political and social objectives which attempt to convert Rwanda from a low-income country to a middle-income state in a twenty-year period. The Kagame presidency's aspirations are, therefore, contracted in six major areas: 1) Good Governance and Capable State, 2) Human Resource Development and a Knowledge-based Economy, 3) a Private Sector-led Economy, 4) Infrastructure Development, 5) Productive and Market-oriented Agriculture, and 6) Regional and International Economic Integration (MINECOFIN, 2000). Following the remarks of the IMF, Rwanda has grown "about an 8 percent a year over the last decade" (International Monetary Fund, 2011), a growth that seems to be parallel with the implementation of *Vision 2020* measures of technocratic governance.

Vision 2020 is also composed by four cross cutting areas, namely, protection of the environment, sustainable natural resource management, science and technology and gender equality. When regarding gender equality and although we will further refer to the implications this strategic national plan has had in the gender dimension of the state, it is important to mark that Rwanda has made, at least in theory, several achievements, the most often cited been the creation of the most gender-equal parliament in the world with 64% of female members in 2013 (Nimusima, Karuhanga, & Mukarutesi, 2018). Nevertheless, although the general friendly approach the early RPF government in Rwanda had towards gender equality previous the year 2000, since Vision 2020 implementation, the country seems to have moved from a mere data representation to an equality "embedded in laws" (Burnet J. , 2008). Since 2003 Rwanda has a gender-sensitive constitution, "women enjoy equal inheritance rights; and there is a law on the prevention, protection and punishment of gender-based violence (2006)"(Ansoms & Rostagno, 2012). Furthermore, Rwanda has attempted to mainstream gender in their institutions. A striking example is the modification of the Ministry of Gender and the Promotion of Family (MIGEPROF) which, currently, enjoys "sufficient legitimacy to ensure that the gender aspect is taken into account in the country's development process" (Holvoet & Ingberg, 2010).

3.4. Gender quotas in Rwanda

In 2003 Rwanda's constitution was redrafted. This new legal text implemented several changes, among others a strong attempt to create a legal framework of action for *Vision 2020.* The 2003 constitution reconstruct Rwanda's legislative power into two main organs: The Chamber of Deputies composed by 80 seats and the Senate with 26 seats.

Table 3 Women in Rwanda's Chamber of Deputies after gender quota (2003-2013) Source: (Burnet J., 2008)			
Year	**Seats**	**Women**	**% women**
2003	80	39	48,8
2008	80	45	56.3
2013	80	51	63.7

Table 4 Women in Rwanda's Senate after gender quota (2003-2013) Source: (Burnet J., 2008)			
Year	**Seats**	**Women**	**% women**
2003	26	9	34.6
2008	26	10	38.5
2013	26	9	34.6

As previously mentioned, this constitution is considered by several scholars as gender sensitive constitution (Burnet, 2008; Nimusima, Karuhanga, & Mukarutesi, 2018; Longman, 2006). A noteworthy feature regarding gender equality was the implementation of gender quotas which extented government wide in Rwanda's decision-making organs, the consitution hence stablished a "minimun 30% of women in all decision making bodies in guvermental institutions" (Goverment of Rwanda, 2017). Although there is no gender quota for party lists, since the implementation of this measure in 2003, several parties have included "significant numbers of women on their lists, especially the RPF which has won all elections by a significant majority" (Bauer & Burnet, 2013).

In spite of everything, it is important to remark that although Rwanda has stroke towards a better gender equality policy, there are several areas which remain hindering this process. Furthermore, it is important to remark the danger that the creation of *rosy* interpretations of the female's struggle for equality in Rwanda might have in the fight. As we will further see in this thesis, gender policies have many angles and sides, the motives behind and the outcomes of the implemented policies are still nowadays a matter of debate. It is crucial to determine whereas these approaches have served for the bigger purpose of gender equality or whereas they have served as a political disguise for an authoritarian regime. Whatsoever, it is imperative to determine if Rwanda can set an example for a truly and prosperous integration of gender in politics, not only for the African continent, but globally.

4. Theoretical Framework

Through the beginning of this thesis, we have mentioned in numerous occasions the word gender. Although there is a general understanding of the simpler definition of this word, as a consequence of the current debate, it is necessary, for the purpose of this thesis, to distinguish between what would be considered "gender" and "sex".

Gender refers to "the personality traits and conceptions of self that we expect people to have on the basis of their sex, where masculinities are associated with maleness and femininities with femaleness" (Tickner & Sjoberg, 2011). The differentiation on physical features has been translated in a cultural division which is "marked by different physical productive capacities and qualities according to history, geography, culture, and tradition" (Roberts & Soederberg, 2012).

Before engaging with the theoretical framework in which the pertinent analysis would be based on, it is crucial to differentiate between *Practical* and *Strategic* gender needs or interests. According to Molyneux "Gender interests are those that women (or men for that matter) may develop by virtue of their social positioning through gender attributes. Gender interests can be either strategic or practical each being derived in a different way and each involving differing implications for women's subjectivity" (Molyneux, 1981). Strategic gender needs make reference to those whose scope regards the overcoming of female's subordination to men. Forms of these strategic gender needs include division of labour, discrimination, reproductive rights, etc. Consequently they "will vary depending on the particular cultural and socio- political context within which they are formulated" (Moser, 1989).

In contrast, practical needs usually are a response to a perceived necessity in a particular context, thus, they are developed from concrete conditions and experiences from the engendered position of females. As described by Molyneux "they do not generally entail a strategic goal such as women's emancipation or gender equality . . . nor do they challenge the prevailing forms of subordination even though they arise directly out of them" (Molyneux, 1985).

This differentiation is a key factor in the implementation of feminist and gendered policies in developing countries since as expressed by Bunch "to take feminism to a woman who has no water, no food and no home is to talk nonsense" (Bunch, 1980).

4.1. Feminism and Gender Approaches in International Relations

When talking about feminism there is a dual connotation that would be used along this project. On the one hand, we find that feminism is defined as the "political movement interested primarily in women's rights and gender emancipation" (Tickner & Sjoberg, 2011). On national and international premises, feminism has acquired in the latest decades a noteworthy momentum in the general and mainstream audiences, promoting a mor gender-equal approach to national governance. Some feminist scholars (Krolokke & Sorenson, 2005) have divided this movement into three waves.

The first wave concerns to the suffrage movements during the 19th and 20th century, mainly centred in women's right to vote and property rights. The second wave began in the 1960s and extended its influence until the 1980s; second wave feminist addressed the inequalities indistinguishably associated with female cultural and political roles, "they encouraged women to understand aspects of their personal lives as deeply politicised and a reflection of sexist power structures" (Narain, 2014). The third wave of feminism, however, attempted to challenge the ostensible second wave's essentialist definition of femininity, as Gillis, Howie and Munford explained, second wave feminism delimited that "for every specific kind of entity there is a set of characteristics, all of which any entity of that kind must possess" (Gillis, Howie, & Munford, 2007) which emphasized the experience of upper-middle class females, denying the struggle of non-white working class women. Nevertheless, the chronological division of feminist waves has a deep Westernised connotation. The process of female emancipation was unequal worldwide, for instance, female suffrage was not a reality in Rwanda until 1961.

On the other hand, this conception of feminism has been accompanied by a scholarly approach which not only attempts to look at the gender dimension of the world, but also how seeing women and gender might be an indispensable feature for understanding world relations, withal, gender is the most primary and distinct division among human beings.

Feminist theories became a part of International Relations (IR) discipline between 1980s and 1990s, however, since then and still nowadays, the general consensus on the mainstream academia is that Feminism and gender theories are part of a criticism to standard approaches such as realism or liberalism. Indeed, it challenges the basic masculine foundations of IR "in terms of ontology (the philosophical study of the nature of being or reality) and epistemology (the branch of philosophy concerned with the nature and scope of knowledge)" (Narain, 2014). As an antithesis to classical rationalism IR disciplines, women are generically associated with the private realm, domesticity morality, subjectivity and passion (Sylvester, 1994), hence they have been seen as passive subjects of the international sphere rather than active actors which modify, create and shape the global scenario.

Nonetheless, the latest decades, international organizations have attempted to mainstream the gender analysis in their policies. As stated in the Beijing declaration of 1995 mainstreaming is defined as applying "a gender perspective in all policies and programmes so that, before decisions are taken, an analysis is made of the effects on women and men, respectively" (United Nations, 1995). The growing awareness of female headed households constituting the "poorest of the poor" enhanced the general acknowledgement that previous female-oriented development plans did not function as expected, consequently, gender mainstreaming was an attempt to "rectify the slow pace of progress in women's status in developing countries and at the global level" (True, 2010).

Gender mainstreaming at the institutional level has followed a liberal integrationist approach. Institutions such as UNDP, the World Bank and the ILO have impregnated their procedures with a liberal feminist policy whose scope has been dual; first integrating gender issues into all of the activities funded and executed by an organization, and (2) diffusing responsibility for gender mainstreaming beyond the WID/gender units – through mechanisms such as gender training and guidelines – thus making it a routine concern of every bureaucratic unit" (Razavi & Miller, 1995).

Although these international organizations encourage and commit to the mainstreaming of gendered approaches and solution in their policymaking, there is a general bias of contemplating gender perspectives as a problem-solving device rather than a global goal, hence, focusing on the utilitarian approach to them rather than advocating for a genuine reconstruction of the IR understanding. Hence, gendered analyses have been employed as a way of "increasing the legitimacy of international norms such as liberal democracy, humanitarian intervention, free trade, regional integration and so on" (Whitworth, 2004). Following Shepherd (Shepherd, 2010) criticism to institutional mainstreaming, international institutions reproduce hegemonic gender identities and cleavages, whereas feminist approaches to IR attempt to destabilase existing gendered meanings and masculine hegemonies, therefore, the implementation of mainstreaming by these organization has seldomly led to the questioning of liberal feminism and liberal market structures which "privilege masculine agency and reinforce gendered inequalities in power and resources in the market, state and civil society" (True, 2010). After all, the underlying gendered structure of liberal capitalist market is depended in household economies and the dependence to informal female's work as child bearers.

The feminist scholarly has focused on understanding the world through gender lenses as much as acquiring the recognition as an inalienable part of the IR theoretical framework. Feminist theories hence have stated that "the dynamics of marriages, of sexual relationships, of masculine expectations of men and feminine expectations of women, and of household-level

political economies as it does on IR's "traditional" issues" (Tickner & Sjoberg, 2011). Consequently, to separate the "feminist sense" form the analysis of the social, economic and political relations within and outside states, is to obliterate a crucial dimension for having a deeper understanding of these dynamics and thus, have a real impact on them.

4.2. Feminism in and by the Global South

Since the early 1990s, women's representation in national legislatures has experienced a dramatically increase worldwide and notably in sub-Saharan Africa (Bauer, 2012). Gender equity in the Global South has witnessed significant achievement in the area, striking examples are the "reduced rates of maternal mortality, increased access to schooling for girls, rising female labour force participation, and an impressive rise in the level of women's participation in political processes and institutions" (Nazneen, Sam, & Sifaki, 2020). The augmentation in research and implementation of gendered policies in the Global South can be considered the principal justification for this improvement in female policies, nevertheless, the research in gender equity policies in the Global South constitutes "a particular type of conceptual and methodological challenge, one that involves trying to track the complex interplay of interests, ideas, and institutions within wider and shifting relations of power" (Nazneen, Sam, & Sifaki, 2020). Nevertheless, the same tools that have promoted gender equity in the Global North, are unlikely to serve as mechanisms for the global South, where, as previously mentioned the chronological and socio- cultural realties have been and are fundamentally different.

To better appraise the evolution of gendered policy making in the Global South and particularly in sub-Saharan Africa, it is necessary to engage with the idea of *post-colonial feminism*.

According to Piedaleu and Rishi, post-colonial feminism is understood as "as an explicit transnational and globally constructed form of critical race feminism. It engages with the textures of everyday life that give form and grounding to critiques of imperialism and yield complex understanding of the entanglements of gender, race and sexuality in nation and empire building as well as in resistance movements and anti- imperial struggle" (Piedaleu & Rishi, 2017). General academia has understood post-colonial feminism as another form of post-colonial studies or a critic to other understandings of feminism, however, it cannot be treated as such. Post-colonial feminism strives for the recognition that the experiences lived by females in the post-colony, namely the regions commonly address as the Global South, are structurally different than elsewhere, withal "the West has been the privileged location of universal learning, while the non-west variously known as the ancient world, the orient, the

primitive world, the third world, the underdeveloped world, the developing world and now the global south, has been seen primarily as a place of parochial wisdom, of antiquarian traditions, of exotic ways and means… above all of unprocessed data" (Comaroff & Comaroff, 2012).

As previously mentioned, post-colonial feminism states that the struggle for gender equality and the challenges females face in the post-colony are intrinsically different from those experienced by women in western countries. Although the post-colonial period relates to a specific momentum in history comprehended from the late 1950s until the early 1990s, it is important to remark that there is a contemporary reality which is not fixed in this limited space of time, but rather has expanded in a series of repercussions which are undeniable present nowadays (Piedaleu & Rishi, 2017).

In most Global South societies "the stereotype of the male breadwinner, the male as productive worker, predominates even when it is not borne put in reality" (Moser, 1989) this can be appreciated even in those regions where men unemployment is severely higher than female unemployment. Furthermore, in sub-Saharan Africa, the rate of low middle-income households is higher than in other regions in the world, in Rwanda, as an example, there is 6.5 million people living in the international poverty line (US$1.90, 2011 PPP, per day per capita), a rate of 55.5% (World Bank, 2020). Low-income households are presumably more gendered violent and less prone to achieve female equality. This phenomenon is a consequence of the "triple role" women occupy not only in the family unit but also in a community level.

According to Caroline Moser (Moser, 1989), in most low-income households "women's work" not only includes the per se *reproductive work* or child-bearing work, but also have a role as secondary income earners, what is defined as *productive work.* Furthermore, the deficient state provision of basic services have linked women's status with *community work,* "where there is open confrontation between community level organizations and local authorities in attempts to put direct pressure on the state or non-governmental organizations for infrastructural provision, again it is women who, as an extension of their domestic role, frequently take primary responsibility for the formation, organization and success of the local level protest groups" (Moser, 1989).

As we will further observe in the present study, these circumstances led to the formation of grassroots movements which sought female emancipation in Rwanda, however, and still nowadays, the division between the conceptions of female and male versions of state and nation (Pettman, 2005) have had a deep impact in the differentiated role women and men hold at the community level, "while women have a community managing role based on

the provision of items of collective consumption, men have a community leadership role, in which they organize at the formal political level generally within the framework of national politics" (Moser, 1989).

As we have previously mentioned, liberal capitalist market depends on the unpaid female work for maintaining a viable structure, hence, both reproductive and community work done by females are ignored since they are both seen as natural and non-productive, are not valued" (Moser, 1989). Consequently, the issue of the triple role in females' work is exacerbated and entangled in the balancing of their "natural roles" and productive roles.

4.3. Women's Representation in Authoritarian States

The aforementioned mainstreaming of liberal feminism in both international and national level, has directed the focus on "the inclusion or representation of women and perspectives on women's as well as men's lived realities in policymaking" (True, 2010). Thus, the inclusion of female representatives in governmental policy-making organs has been crucial for states to legitimise their compromise with democratic values even though the claims of increasing authoritarianism in their countries.

Political transitions, ofttimes as a consequence of protracted conflicts in the region, have catalysed in several cases the mobilisation of national women's movements whose implications in the design of new constitutions and laws "which have provided the legal foundations and political frameworks for the institutions and mechanisms to bring more women into political office" (Bauer & Burnet, 2013). The advocacy for a larger representation of females in parliaments is based on the conception that they will represent women's interest and act as important role models, such striking example is the consideration of Rwandan's femininity to "less ethnic" and hence less violent than men (Berry, 2018). This representation has been acquired in numerous times as the result of impositions of gender quotas.

Across the sub-Saharan Africa region, quotas have been designed in a variety of manners, with the eagerness that overtime women's equal representation would be considered a reality and such measures would no longer be necessary (Bauer, 2008). The type of gender quotas employed is influenced by the type of electoral system used in the state, "typically voluntary party quotas will most likely be used with proportional representation (PR) electoral systems and reserved or special seats with plurality/majority electoral systems" (Laserud & Taphorn, 2007).

The use of gender quotas in sub-Saharan Africa has had several detractors among scholars and practitioners alike. The debate here is dual. On the one hand, some scholars (Devlin &

Elgie, 2008; Yoon, 2001; Burnet, 2008 have challenged the assumption whether "descriptive representation has led to substantive representation impacts"[1] (Bauer & Burnet, 2013). On the other, several scholars (Coffé, 2012; Barnes & Burchard, 2012; Burnet, 2011) have focused in determining if "descriptive representation has led to symbolic representation effects"[2] (Bauer & Burnet, 2013).

Furthermore, gender quotas have raised the question whether autocratic regimes have embraced these policies in order to increase their support in the national legislature and in order to attract donors and investors internationally (Goetz & Hassim, 2003). One of the realities some sub-Saharan African regions is that the women that accomplish the criteria for being members of the policymaking organisations at the state level are the "elite", thus, they are unrelated with the struggles of the majority of their female's constituents (Hassim, 2010).

Questions of whether women policymakers are more eager to better represent women's interest or whether these same women are undermining democracy in sub-Saharan African states have been analysed. Having said this, it is important to remark that the deepening of democracy is a mission of the society as a whole, and cannot be expected that females alone or gender quotas might result in an increase of democracy per se. As we will analyse further in this study, women's contribution, from grassroot movements to MPs have had on several occasion a profound impact in the legislative chambers. Female equality should not be done with utilitarian purposes, but rather because of human justice.

5. Objectives and Questions

The firsts stages of this study have dealt with the current status in which the state of Rwanda is in terms of feminism and gender policies. Data shows how Rwanda presents an engagement with gender equality far more advanced that the rest of their neighbours and it is positioned as one of the most gendered equal parliaments in the world. However, and as we will further

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[1] Understood as advancing women's interests through the policy making process and measured in terms of policy agendas or legislative items that promote protect or enhance women's rights and interests (Bauer & Burnet, 2013).

[2] Understood as altering gendered ideas about the roles of women and men in politics, raising awareness of what women can achieve as political actors and legitimizing them as political actors, or encouraging women to become involved in politics as voters, activists, candidates, leaders. (Bauer & Burnet, 2013).

discuss through this thesis, these policies have had several detractors and the increasing authoritarianism that the Rwandan government is acquired is casting shadows and doubts over if this feminist tendency is a truthful commitment or whether if it is serving as a shield for external criticism. The aim of this study would be to discern the situation of females in the country analysing the impact of policies in gender and class relations, answering the question whether Rwanda's feminist policies have actually entitle female emancipation.

Furthermore, this study would also engage with the role that international cooperation for development is having in the country and which impact might have for female equality. As previously stated, Rwanda has become in the latest decades a "donor darling" (Marysse, Ansoms, & Cassimon, 2007) what implicates that the expectations as well as the donation flux have been substantially increased since the arrival of Paul Kagame to power, despise the denounces of democracy diminishment. In relation to that, this thesis would aim to solve the question whether if it is possible for female emancipation to thrive under a state with low democratic quality.

In order to do so, I have based my analysis in previous qualitative research that have dealt in depth with the post genocide gender policy reconstruction in Rwanda. Among the authors, we can bring the attention upon the work of Jennie E. Burnet who has painted the broadest picture of the feminist panorama and their implications for the different sectors of society. Furthermore, it is also important to highlight the book War, Women and Power by Marie E. Berry (Berry, 2018), which compares the upsurge of feminist movements in both Rwanda and Bosnia drawing a causality line between the devastation of historical structures genocides might lead to and the upsurge of gender equality-based grassroots movements.

Nevertheless, it is necessary to remark that the implementation of feminist policies in Rwanda has been an academic divisive academic factor. On the one hand we find a part of the academia (Uvin, 2007; Clark, 2010, Amstutz, 2006) which has underscored the extraordinary efforts Rwanda's government has accomplished in order to overcome the disruption on the rule of law after the 1994 events. Moreover, authors such as Nimusa, Karuhanga and Mukarutesi, have addressed what they called "a genuine commitment" towards gender equality and the democratisation process described in the aforementioned Agenda 2020 (Nimusima, Karuhanga, & Mukarutesi, 2018).

On the other, there is an ongoing critic among scholars (Tiemessen, 2004; Ansoms & Rostagno, 2012; Reyntjens, 2011; Debussche & Ansoms, 2013) which implied that the feminist policies applied by the Rwandan government have served as a public relations strategy to attract donors and deviate the attention of the increasingly authoritarian nature of the Kagame legislature.

6. Analysis

War impels to rapid social changes. A country which experiences war it is subjected to institutional breakdown, physical and economic collapse, psychological damage of their citizens and incalculable suffering. Furthermore, war and the post conflict scenario obligate to a renegotiation of domestic power relations which entangles all levels of society from gender to class (Tripp, 2015). According to the studies of Hughes regarding the feminisation of politics in the twentieth century "Countries that have experienced war since 1980s have higher rates of women in their legislatures than countries that have not experienced war" (Hughes, 2009). After the violence occurred in 1994, Rwanda experimented a reconfiguration of gendered power relations, however it can be argued that the genocide did not create a unique configuration of gender awareness but rather accelerate a tendency that was set in motion decades before.

Although the scope of this study does not deal with the historical events prior to the investiture of Kagame's government in 2003, it is necessary to clarify the position gender and females have in the Rwandese imaginary.

Before the era of colonialism, in what today conforms the state of Rwanda, the population could be divided into three main ethnic groups: Hutus, agriculture based and the largest group; Tutsi representing the aristocracy; and Twa, mainly, hunter-gatherers. "The Tutsi were traditionally cattle herders and were strongly represented in political functions. The Hutu, in contrast, were agriculturalist" (Bornkamm, 2012). These categories do not respond to a fixed anthropological system, but rather represented a political and social structure. Hutus and Tutsis cohabited the same social structures, occasionally leading to intermarriage. It was not until the entrance of colonial European powers that this distinction became a matter of ethnicity.

Throughout the colonial period the hierarchisation of ethnicity became political. In order to control a territory more effectively, Europeans relied on the racialisation of the autochthonous hierarchical systems by making a distinction among "natives" and "nonnatives" (Mamdani, 2001). When the territory of contemporary Rwanda became part of German East Africa, the higher socio-economical position held by Tutsis became a symbol of their nonindigenous origins, and therefore "the colonizers concluded that the Tutsi must be a superior race closely related to Europeans" (Bornkamm, 2012). Several scholars have attempted to discern what differentiates Hutus and Tutsis, from migration patterns to theories of sexual selection based on class (Hiernaux, 1963). However, although determining the origins behind the ethnic cohabitation in Rwanda goes beyond the aim of this study, it is important to emphasise that Hutus and Tutsis have a subsequent history which constituted them common language and practiced a common religion" (Mamdani, 2001).

The colonial period transformed Hutus and Tutsis from cultural identities to political ones, "To be a Tutsi was thus to be in power, near power or simply to be identified with power" (Mamdani, 2001).

Since the differentiation between Hutus and Tutsis corresponded to a socioeconomical distinction rather than an ethnic based one, it is logical to assume that when regarding the female population, these discernments were based on the economic capabilities of the household.

The roles that women and men had within the community and the household were complementary. As a common trend in the rest of the world "motherhood was the primary duty of married women and women in averaged had more than eight children" (Berry, 2018). Women commonly conducted farming and harvesting related tasks while men were expected to look after livestock. Despite both Hutu and Tutsi women were subjected to men and they could not separate, inherit land or have an independent economic life, Tutsi females generally did not engage in physically demanding labour and enjoyed relative economic security. Tutsi families were generally wealthier than their Hutu neighbours, hence polygamous marriages were more common as a consequence of the male being more able to support more than two families (Codere, 1973). Women's labour was essential for the survival of the household; however, they had no control over their production.

Although the German occupation of Rwanda was merely symbolic (Newbury C. , 1980), the posterior Belgian rule did engage in patronage Tutsi natives. This was translated in a tighter relation between Tutsi patrons and Hutus peasant, which curtailed women's access to land and power (Jefremovas, 1991). The arrival of the colonial powers did not alter the gender relations per se, however the ethnicization of the socio-economic structures tether Hutu women to poverty.

The decolonization process in Rwanda continued the colonial narrative, promoting a clear antagonism between these artificial ethnicities. In the years following its independence, Rwanda would start a process of weak democratization constantly discombobulated by coups d'état. This study would not deal with the political process lived during this period; however, it is important to remark that despite the upsurge of the authoritarian rule of president Habyarimana, a modest women's movement emerged in the 1980s, nourished by the general awareness of females' propensity to poverty in developing nations (Burnet, 2012). Rwandan women obtained the right to vote after the independence, "during this period the percentage of seats women held in parliament increased from 12.9 % in 1983 to 15.7% in 1988" (Berry, 2018), but most of this seat belonged to Habyarimana immediate family or relatives. Women were still constrained in most of basic freedoms, "they required their husband's consent to engage in any profit- making activity, register business, buy land, or undertake any legal action in court" (Jefremovas, 1991).

Withal, in 1992, a coalition of women's organisations successfully lobbied to create the Ministry for Women and Family Promotion.

The exchange of power between Hutus and Tutsis during the Habyarimana period had severe impact in women's life. Whereas Hutu women were subject to a heavier economic and labour exploitation previous and during the colonial period, the arrival of a Hutu ethnic-inclined government converted Tutsi women in targets of gender abuses at the systematic level. A series of moral clean-up initiatives conducted by the authorities begun in cities as Kigali. "Police rounded up young, urban women who dressed stylishly or consorted with Europeans expatriates, beating them and even reportedly stripping them naked in public. Authorities detained some of these women in moral 're-education centres'" (Verwimp, 2013). Women subject to these abuses were mostly Tutsi.

Scholars and media have written countless pages about the events that driven the Rwandan society to the "only real genocide since the Holocaust" (Schabas, 2005). The aim of this study is not to determine the causes behind the violence in 1994, it suffices to say that the antagonization of Hutus and Tutsis during decades derived on an ethic security dilemma[3], hence Hutus and Tutsi enter into a dynamic where the upsurge of one group revitalised the fear of oppression of the other. The agency[4] created by the Hutu-inclined government ended resembling the oppression they attempted to scape. Consequently, a structure-agency problem arose where the incapacity or unwillingness of the Habyarimana government and the international community to create new common narratives in the collective imaginary and to erase the structures imbibed in class inequalities, which have been crystalised in the different ethnicities in the territory. The result was one of the most brutal events of human history, ending with 80% of the Tutsi population exterminated (Human Rights Watch , 2014).

Women were major victims of the genocide. Rwandan females not only became the targets of mass killings and violence, in addition, perpetrators employed rape as a form of violence with not only ethnic but also class, and gender dimensions, rather than individual extension of personal dominant relations. It is estimated that between 250, 000 and 500, 000 rape crimes were committed during the three months that the genocide lasted (Braunéus, 2008). As pre-

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[3] On the local level, minority groups will be insecure *vis-a`-vis* a dominant group, and from this tension, militant action can begin, sometimes quickly accelerating conflict dynamics" (Wallensteen, 2002).

[4] Agency: Actors. Entities able to take decision and actions in any context.
Structures: Factors that determine the contest where actors operate
For further resources refer to Wendt, A. (1987). The Agent-Structure Problem in International Relations Theory. *International Organization,* 41(3), 335-370. Retrieved November 19, 2020, from
http://www.jstor.org/stable/2706749

viously referred, the ethnic linage followed a patrilinear line in the Rwandan rationale, conse-quently, sexual violence became a political act designed to carry out an officially orchestrated policy (Buss, 2009). The emasculation of an identity. The utilisation of women and the patriar-chal thought of motherhood served as a manner of eliminating the source of ethnicity.

Having said this it is important to remark that the current narrative positions Tutsi as *of-fended* and Hutus as *offenders*. Nevertheless, the reality is that many abuses happened outside the mere dyad of Tutsi as victims and Hutus as perpetrators, extreme militias raped, enslave and abuse of women in both sides of this ethical spectrum. According to Thompson among the estimated numbers of sexual abuse victims there is extremely high levels of Hutu women as victims of their co-ethnics (Thomson, 2013). This single-story-told has had a severe impact in females lives and reconciliation within Rwanda. The acknowledgement denial of a gendered specific issue as gender violence to a part of the population has broaden the gap between Tutsi and Hutu females and has anchor the latter to a position no longer of victim or sufferer but of "whore" (Sjoberg & Gentry, 2007). The specific economic breach between Hutu and Tutsi women implies that Hutus are more prone to live in communities where sexual stigma has more severe implications for the community life. Furthermore, the experience denial of the sexual violence has as a consequence the negation of access to the respective legal and social security structures designed to cope with the situation of victims of sexual violence. As a striking exam-ple, Hutu females are denied their appearance as victims in the Gacaca courts (Braunéus, 2008).

Despite this differentiation, both Hutu and Tutsi female experience a situation of extreme poverty after the genocide. As before mentioned, female headed households are more likely to fall below the poverty line (Moser, 1989), hence, "in process of securing their families' basic needs, women began expanding their social networks and interacting with foreign and local actors" (Berry, 2018). They present themselves as less ethnic, less politically engage, and con-sequently, more suitable to fulfil the holes left by dead and detained in the new RPF system.

The genocide left an increasing number of female-headed households, but the impact was not only economic, the severe psychological trauma experience by women in Rwanda promote the emergence of informal self-help groups, again the community service focused labour of females, appeared as a solution whereas the newly formed government could not reach. By 1997, around 15,400 women organisations were formally created (Newbury & Bald-win, 2000). By 1999 there were "120 women's organizations operating at the prefectural level, 1,540 at the commune level, 11,560 at the sector level, and 86,290 at the cell level" (USAID , 2000). Moreover, "women succeeded in seeking aid or small loans from humanitarian NGOs or government projects, they gained value in the post war social context" (Berry, 2018). These groups transition from forums to alleviate female sadness and psychological distress to income

generators and advocate for females' rights within the new Rwanda. A female grassroots movement emerged. Although there is no specific data on the personal profile of the members of this groups, studies by Berry show that "most were Tutsi with secondary or university education".
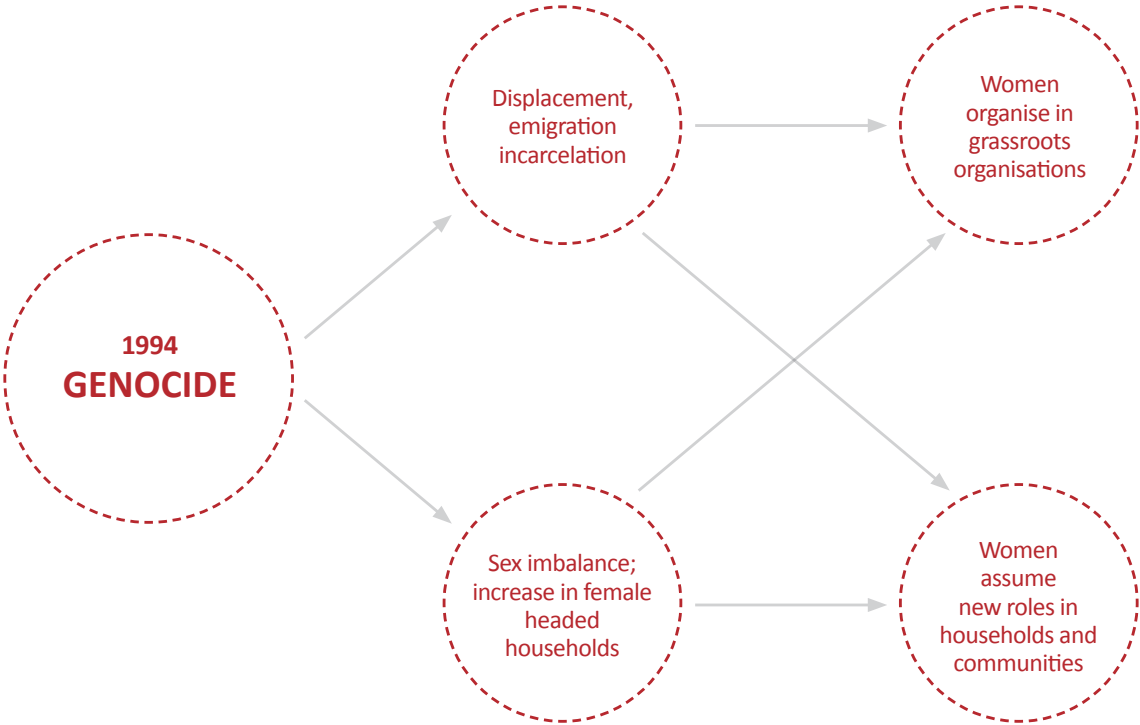
The newly formed RPF government contributed to the arise of these organisations. Afterall, the war had displaced the pre-existing rules in which Rwandan society had been based for decades. Furthermore, the personal experience of the members of the RPF was greatly influenced by the guerrilla movements in Uganda, where the female leadership was not uncommon. Consequently, RPF began vocally encouraged women to join politics, often prioritising women who were emerging as leaders of local grassroots organisations (Berry, 2018). During the nine years (1994-2003) that the transition period lasted, Rwandan women's social role developed. Women's political value thrived in a scenario that merged from the urgency to meet the imperious population's basic needs and the demand for a new, less violent, political actor.

6.1. Real Transformation?

The Rwanda's 2003 constitution was the culmination of a transition process that started in the aftermath of the 1994 Genocide. Not only was an attempt to create a complete new Rwandan society, but it became a role model for equalitarian feminist polices worldwide. This text set a legal framework by which gender quotas were established government-wide, reaching all

organs of public administration. Hence, the constitution marks a 30% minimum percentage of women representation "in all decision-making bodies"[5]. Simultaneously, the 2003 constitution reconstructed Rwanda's legislative body into two chambers: the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate with 80 and 26 seats respectively (Rwanda's Goverment, 2003). "The senate composition must be a minimum of 30% women, but the constitution does not delineate how this threshold should be achieved. Presumably, the president and the Forum of Political Organizations negotiate, if necessary, to meet the quota. In the chamber of deputies, 53 seats are directly elected via proportional, closed party lists while the remaining 27 seats are indirectly elected with 24 reserved women's seats elected by district level women's councils, 2 reserved youth seats elected by the National Youth Council, and 1 reserved disabled seat elected by the Federation of the Disabled" (Bauer & Burnet, 2013). Nevertheless, no quota is legally applied on the party lists and, until date, no party has imposed them within their internal regulation. This idea together with the increasing number of women included on party lists might be an indicator that the tendency in Rwanda is towards a mainstreaming of females in political organs which goes beyond the mere quota system.

Having said this it is important to clarify that the majority of legislative achievements in the area of gender equality occurred previous the implementation of these quotas, when, as previously mentioned there was a vivid and thriving grassroot movement for female rights. Striking examples are the classification of rape and sexual violence as major genocidal crimes, increased motherhood and pregnancy right in the workplace, and the famous 1999 Inheritance Law (Rwnadan Governemnt , 1999), which granted women and men with the same property rights. This has created a paradox within the Rwandan gendered perspective. On the one hand there is the increasing idea that higher representation of females in policy making organs would be accompanied with a general improvement of women's lives. On the other, there is a depressing scenario where inequality and economic distress is still whipping Rwanda's population, broadening the gap not only between men and women, but between rich and poor.

The Rwanda political elite class woman has experienced an extension of her fundamental political rights. This woman, however, normally corresponds to highly educated anglophone Tutsi, whose education has allowed her to be part of the governmental structure (Berry, 2015). Furthermore, while reserved women seats in parliament correspond to geographic regions, there is an extended normality that representatives of those areas do not reside there, since rural

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[5] The Rwandan quota system is complex, comprising reserved women's seats (N = 24) in the lower house of parliament and the constitutionally-mandated quota of 30% women in "all decision-making bodies" fulfilled through a combination of appointments and elections depending on the institution. (Powley, 2003)

districts have low income and low education indexes which hinder the possibility of women accessing to the necessary educational qualification to become part of the decision-making organs. (Bauer & Burnet, 2013). Consequently, despite women in Rwanda enjoy the constitutional framework which legitimises their legal equality, there are profound impediments to the application of such in real life. The following pages of this analysis will engage with four major examples of how certain government-promoted gender policies have impact the socio-economic dimension of the Rwandan population. In first place, the patriarchal norms that domain low income and middle- income society. Secondly, the unexpected effects of educational expectations. Thirdly, the augmentation of gender violence. And lastly, the neglection of the "invisible labour" under the economic rationale.

As previously mentioned, the Genocide and the consequent civil war experienced in 1994 promoted a social political, demographic and economic change within the structures of the Rwandan society. The absence of men-headed households and the place women held as "less ethnic" actors in the Rwandan imaginary, promoted the rise of certain female leaders and the reconstruction of the state's legislative power around their figures. However, despite in theory women have achieved similar rights to their men counterparts, the patriarchal norms that existed in individual relations endured. In the contemporary Rwanda, family relations resemble traditional patriarchal forms (Berry, 2015). Albeit women have the right to manage their own financial status, capital is commonly administrated by the male figure existing in the household, therefore "women depend on their husbands, brothers, or sons for access to land and other services" (Vansina, 2004).

This cultural dependency compels girl with marriage in order to be seen as fully grown women, "a girl, regardless of age, only has the social identity of her brothers or father and is denied full participation in society as an adult until she becomes an *umugore*, a wife" (Jefremovas, 2002). However, it is increasingly difficult to get married in Rwanda. This is as consequence of two factors. In the first place, there is a sex imbalance in the Rwandan territory as a consequence of the killings, imprisonments and the refugees who fled to the Democratic Republic of the Congo, hence, among the Rwandan population comprehended between the ages of twenty and thirty-five, there are one hundred women for every eighty-five men (Republic of Rwanda, 2016) , which implies a 15% of young females which might remain unmarried or which enter in illegal polygamous marriages what might have a consequent moral problematic. Secondly, poverty is still a cumbersome problem in Rwanda with 56.5% of the population living below the poverty line (World Bank, 2016), "male youth in rural parts of the country are expected to construct a house for their bride-to-be prior to marriage, but 18 percent of male youth live in extreme poverty" (Berry, 2015), hence, poor women are less likely to emancipate and have

an independent life away from the parental household. The patriarchal structure that binds marriage with adulthood serves as a mechanism of subjugation and control of women (Epstein, 2007), and little effort has been made by the Rwandan government to tackle this type of problematic within the family structures.

Another outstanding example of the extension to which patriarchal norms are cemented in Rwanda's society is the approach to rape and rape victims. Rape become a major genocidal crime and part of the jurisdiction of the Gacaca courts in 2008, nevertheless, most perpetrators have not been convicted and no compensation has been paid to the victims. "The rapes during the genocide are acknowledged in the general discourse and indeed used as a key point of reference in stories about genocide" (Selimovic, 2020), it appears that despite a general acceptance of rape as a tool of mass violence and ethnic cleansing during the genocide, the individual acknowledgement of violations is still problematic. In addition, studies by Braunéus (Braunéus, 2008) found that those women who testified as rape and sexual violence victims have experienced a re-traumatisation of the events, and have been left with no psychological treatment and stigmatised in the community, "Rwanda rape victims' experiences have been socially labelled as unbearable and unspeakable" (Selimovic, 2020).

Moreover, Rwanda is facing a paradox born from the dyad between education and economic inequality. One of the milestones of the aforementioned Vision 2020 was the implementation of free primary education and the attempt to equalise the number of girls and boys attending school in rural areas (Republic of Rwanda, 2011). This has led to an increase in educational expectations among the Rwandan population, particularly high for girls. However, education is not completely free in Rwanda, and secondary studies are still privately run (Williams, Abbott, & Mupenzi, 2014). It is striking to see that "among the wealthiest 20 per- cent of the population, 15.5 percent of young people have post primary or higher education; among the poorest 60 percent, this number is less than 1 percent" (Berry, 2015). When regarding the indicators of ratio among women and men in high education, reports show that the number of men who attend university is almost 3 times larger than women (Republic of Rwanda, 2016), in 2010, 1.865 women entered college in comparison to 4.801 men. Several of these girls lack of the resources to maintain a westernised fashionable lifestyle since middle class is a minority in Rwanda. Consequently, many entered in clientelist sexual relations or "sugar daddies" which cost tuition fees in exchange for sex (Restless Development, 2011). Official data regarding the use of transactional[6] sex is unavailable, nevertheless, a behavioural surveillance survey

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[6] Transactional sex is defined as a nonmarital sexual relationship that involves the exchange of gifts or cash, and it often happens across generations. (Luke, 2003)

conducted in 2006 found that "12.1% of Rwanda girls had had their first sexual encounter with a man at least ten years their senior" (IRIN News, 2009). The lack of birth control and STD prevention methods together with a vast social stigma related to unmarried relations are only parts of a bigger problematic in which the lack of economic means of certain women force them to prostitute themselves in order to access to university studies and the linkage that this dynamic has with endangering female emancipation process.

In regard to the increase of gender violence, it is necessary to state that this issue is not a problem intrinsic in Rwanda either isolated in low-income countries. It is an ongoing dynamic in the vast majority of the world independently of economic, development or gender equality status. "Men are brought up, even in the most peaceful of times, to identify manhood with a readiness to exercise authority over women and to wield force, against women and other men. In war times they are further trained, and rewarded for the practice of wounding, raping and killing. Often this experience traumatises men as well as their victims. And it shapes their behaviour after war, for the disposition to violence is not readily put aside with demobilisation" (Cockburn, 1998). Following Berry's studies on Bosnia and Rwanda feminist movements, "men firmly view themselves as the power holders and decision makers within the household, while they view women as primarily responsible for children and domestic sphere" (Berry, 2015).

Although legislations such as Law No 59 of 2008 on the criminalization of marital rape have been passed, these efforts have been insufficient, 57.2% of Rwandan women had experiences gender-based violence from their partner and 32% of women reported that their partners had forced them to have sex (Rwanda Men's Resource Centre, 2010). The same study showed that those who were directly affected by the violence of the genocide, approximately an 80% of respondents, had higher rates of perpetrating gender violence than those who weren't. The emancipation process lived in Rwanda is being matched with a *patriarchal backlash*, borrowing the concept from berry. The augmentation of independence and female emancipation in many historical and geographical locations, has been counterpart with an augmentation of the violent and hostile attitudes by the patriarchy[7].

Following this line of thought it is not surprising that the majority of reports for gender-based violence come from high educated and normally employed women, suggesting that men use violence to repress their newly acquired freedoms. However, there is dimension that seems to be hidden from statistics. A study conducted by Ho (Ho, 2011) showed that women in low-income household where more reluctant to denounce their partner for gender-based

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[7] See (Krook, 2015; Blalock, 1967)

violence. Paradoxically, whereas the punishment of perpetrators might be interpreted as the desire outcome "women don't like to talk about the violence they face because if the police are aware of that [abuse], they will imprison their husbands and [the wives] will remain alone" (Ho, 2011) The lack of financial means of low income rural areas women, impedes them from denouncing their aggressor fearing that the consequent punishment might worsen their financial situation. Furthermore, low-income women are less likely to seek for a change in their life since the denounce of their partner might implied a lost in their support network. This might imply not only that the number of poor women who suffer gender-based violence might be higher than those from educated background as previously speculated, but that the overall number of women suffering this type of violence in Rwanda might be bigger that initially estimated.

Lastly, gender emancipation and feminist policies are hinder by Rwanda's attempt to impose an economic rationale in all sectors of the population. Kagame's administration has demonstrated that whereas feminist policies interfere with economic growth, preference is giving to the latter. A notable example is the reduction of maternal paid leave from twelve to six weeks despite the women's majority in the parliament. Moreover, the plan Vision 2020 has entered into conflict with the economical dimension of gender polices. One of the pillars of this political agenda has been "to move beyond past delusions of viable subsistence- based agriculture towards productive high value and market-oriented agriculture" (Debusscher & Ansoms, 2013). In order to fulfil this purpose, Rwanda's government has implemented a policy of sanctions and promotions of certain forms of labour and hygiene. Although to a certain extend this affects both men and women with low income, "they are particularly detrimental to women because low-skill industries dominated by women are disproportionately illegal compared to low-skill industries dominated by men" (Debusscher & Ansoms, 2013) . These policies which attempt to force farmers into maximums of productivity without addressing the gender dimension are likely to enhance the socio-economic gap and trigger women into a spiral of poverty. Furthermore, Rwanda's government has obliterated the "invisible labour". Taking into consideration the aforementioned distribution of community work where women tend to take unpaid tasks, the attempt of the government of formalising this sector has broadened the socio-economic gap. This is a clear example of how governments worldwide depend on the unpaid labour hand, mostly personalised in women, and how the economic capitalist theory sends this type of labour to oblivion, even theoretically engaged feminist states such as Rwanda.

Therefore, women's power cannot be determined by the legal framework, neither the availability of these rights, rather is a matter of control over them. In an increasing authoritarian traditional-based structure, "deeply entrenched social structures pose challenges for women's full control over resources" (Mason, 1986).

6.2. The gender dimension of Rwanda's authoritarianism. Public relations?

Unlike other paramilitary groups, the RPF has a story of female leadership embedded from that of Ugandan National Resistance Movement (Longman, 2006). This together with the afore-mentioned factors of sex imbalance and ethno-nationalistic views on women, promote the up-surge of women into decision making bodies and in general a legal framework that grants fe-males with the same rights as men. However, these advances have been put into question, firstly because of the lack of transformative potential in female's movements; secondly, because the increasing authoritarianism and repression in Kagame's administration.

We consider transformative potential when the implemented polices have "the capacity to address the deeply ingrained societal norms and practices within which gender inequalities are embedded" (Debusscher P. , 2011). In other terms, the assumption that a higher female representation would lead to fundamental change by itself it is erroneous, since the hegemonic structures of the patriarchy ingrained in authoritarianist regimes, would serve the dominant groups, in the case the political elite. The encouragement of women's inclusion in decision mak-ing organs is necessary but not sufficient to undermine the authoritarian structures of Rwanda.

Furthermore, there is an incrementation of authoritarian control in Kagame's adminis-tration. Certain scholars have remarked that the inclusion and the promotion of female leaders in Rwanda might be part of a strategy to increase foreign investment and assent control of an anglophone Tutsi elite and Kagame's power (Pottier, 2002; Reyntjens, 2011). Despise the increase of women representatives in governmental agencies, the grass root movements have diminished, many times not as a consequence of lack of utility but lack of leadership. The RPF has curtailed the civil society by giving political roles to movement's leaders, "which requires them to work to the government's agenda rather than advocate for legal and policy changes to promote the rights of women" (Abbott & Malunda, 2016). The lack of a vibrant civil society eradicates the possible opposition to the RPF hegemonic system and perpetuates the control of Kagame's administration. Moreover, Human Rights Watch have denounced extra official killings allegedly politically motivated of women who have opposed Rwanda's current govern-ment (Human Rights Watch, 2018).

Rwanda's current government has benefited from a *single story* told. In order to construct a new nation under beneficial terms, the RPF has erected a coherent story of the nation which "relies upon stable, gendered, categories that are activated in order to mobilize support around the new and fragile post-conflict national narrative" (Selimovic, 2020). There is little agency for women to act beyond the role of rape victims. This position of sufferer manufactures power through moral righteousness consequently, "glorifying victimhood" (Winter, 2006). Violence,

especially sexual violence such as rape or sex torture to which women were exposed during the genocide, it is particularly linked with the feminisation of nation hood, hence the narrative construction revolves around the raping of Rwanda rather than acknowledging the individual victim. Therefore, we might interpret that the increasing attention to females might be part of an ongoing and more complex construction of a narrative which perpetuates a single story told with the aim of maintaining the political elite which revolves around Kagame's power.

6.3. Development and authoritarianism: How they concern gender empowerment?

Rwanda has experience and increase in ODA flows and foreign investment in the last decades. As previously mentioned, this increase on international monetary "trust" relates with the re-construction period after the genocide and subsequently, with Kagame administration's rise to power. Nevertheless, the linkage between female representation and furthermore, the impact this investment flows might have in Rwandan women are an interesting matter of discuss.
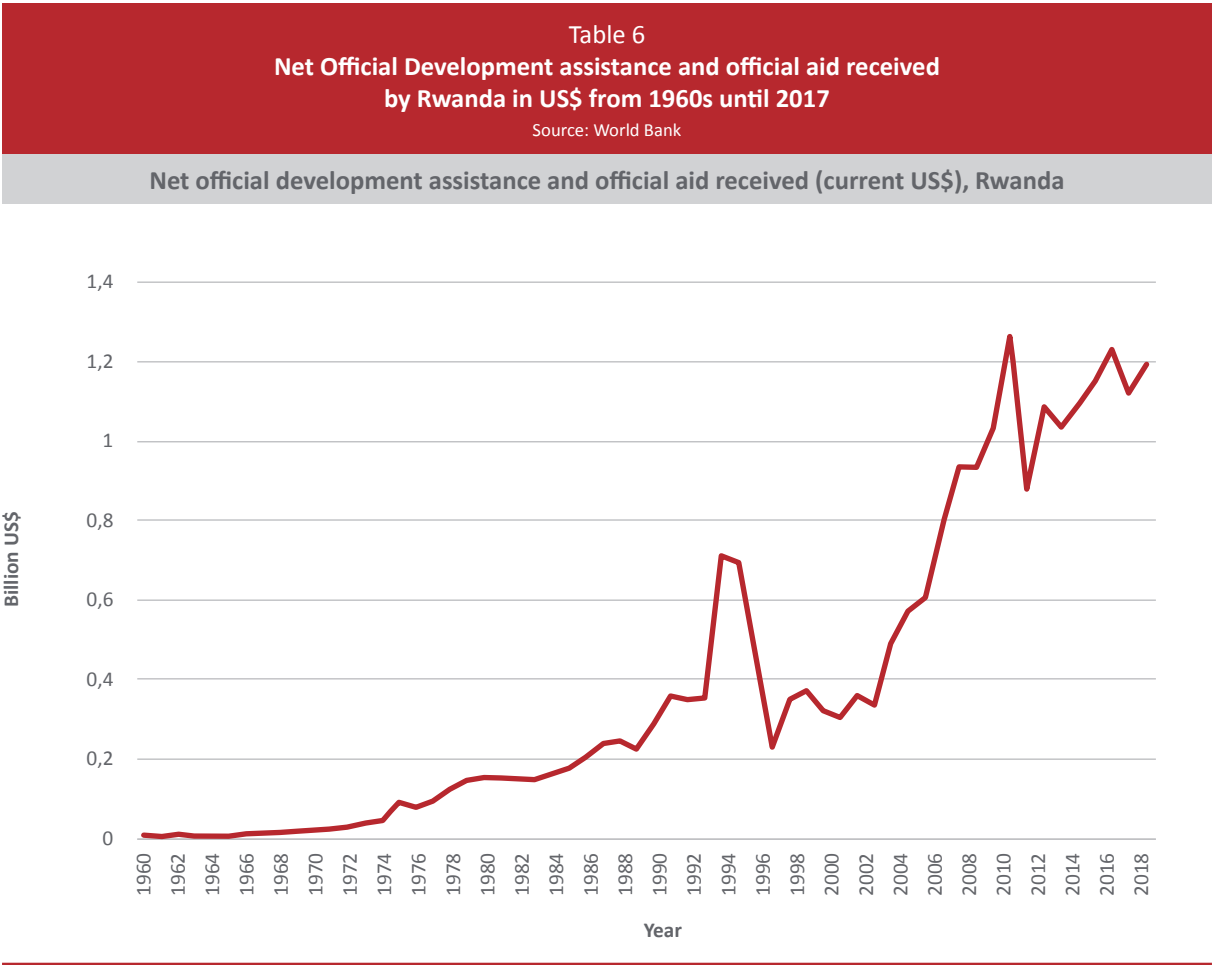
Table 6
Net Official Development assistance and official aid received by Rwanda in US$ from 1960s until 2017
Source: World Bank
Net official development assistance and official aid received (current US$), Rwanda

Table 7
Net Official Development assistance and official aid received by Rwanda in US$ from 1960s until 2017
Source: World Bank

**Foreign direct investment, net inflows (% of GDP), Rwanda**
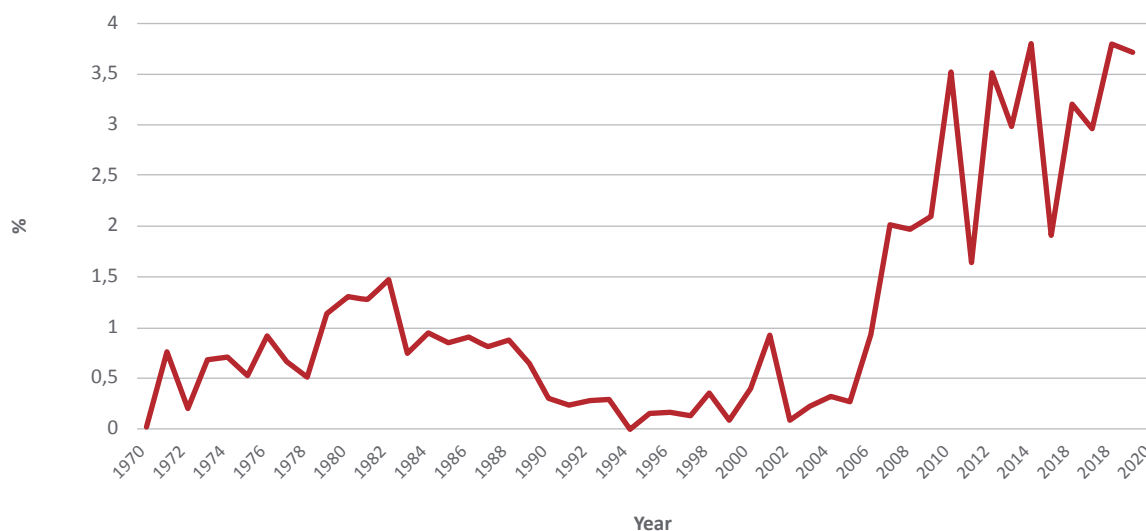
The importance of the role that women represent for development policies is extensively recognised nowadays. Investing in women "speeds economic development by raising productivity and promoting the more efficient use of resources; it produces significant social returns, improving child survival and reducing fertility, and it has considerable intergenerational pay-offs" (Ging & Boyd, 2016). The argument relies on the idea that educated women are more likely to increase human capital of a country by enhancing their own personal productivity resulting in a consequent reduce in poverty.

As can be noted, there is a general understanding that gender inequality is an economic matter and thus, it could be solved by the market forces. "Gender equality is reduced to women's opportunities and empowerment, wherein women's opportunities are limited to market opportunities and empowerment is constricted to economic empowerment in the form of individual human capital investment and job attainment" (Ging & Boyd, 2016). The aforementioned paradox in Rwanda's feminist polices displayed that whenever economic goals enter into competition with the gender equality agenda there was a preference for the former.

Nonetheless, this tendency is not merely enclosed in Rwanda, however, it is part of the general mainstreaming of female empowerment in the development agencies. "Since the 1990s, multinational agencies, NGOs, and policy makers have made the advancement of women a core objective of development initiatives" (Berry, 2015). The structure created by these organisations

rely on the premise of "entryism", the assumption that the augmentation of women into paid labour, decision making structures or merely basic education will unequivocally result into a reduction of gender inequality (Razavi & Miller, 1995). Therefore, the women's empowerment actions taken by these actors have been directed to equalise the number of male and females in these scopes. The post genocide conception in Rwanda was that the access to financial credit would lead to an improvement in productivity, hence, several NGOs and the newly stablished government granted low interest rate loans to women during the post genocide period. Nevertheless, "the best outcomes for economic growth are not necessarily the best outcomes for girls and women" (Woodroffe & Donaldson, 2012). This utilitarian view of gender equality enters into direct opposition with the transformative nature of feminist views, there is little value in normative resources when they served as a way of promoting class discrimination and broaden the economic gap not only between men and women but in the society. Furthermore, this dynamic is particularly problematic since it implies that "if women's productivity can be shown to be consistently lower than men's, then, following the logic of the market, they deserve fewer resources" (Goetz, 1994).
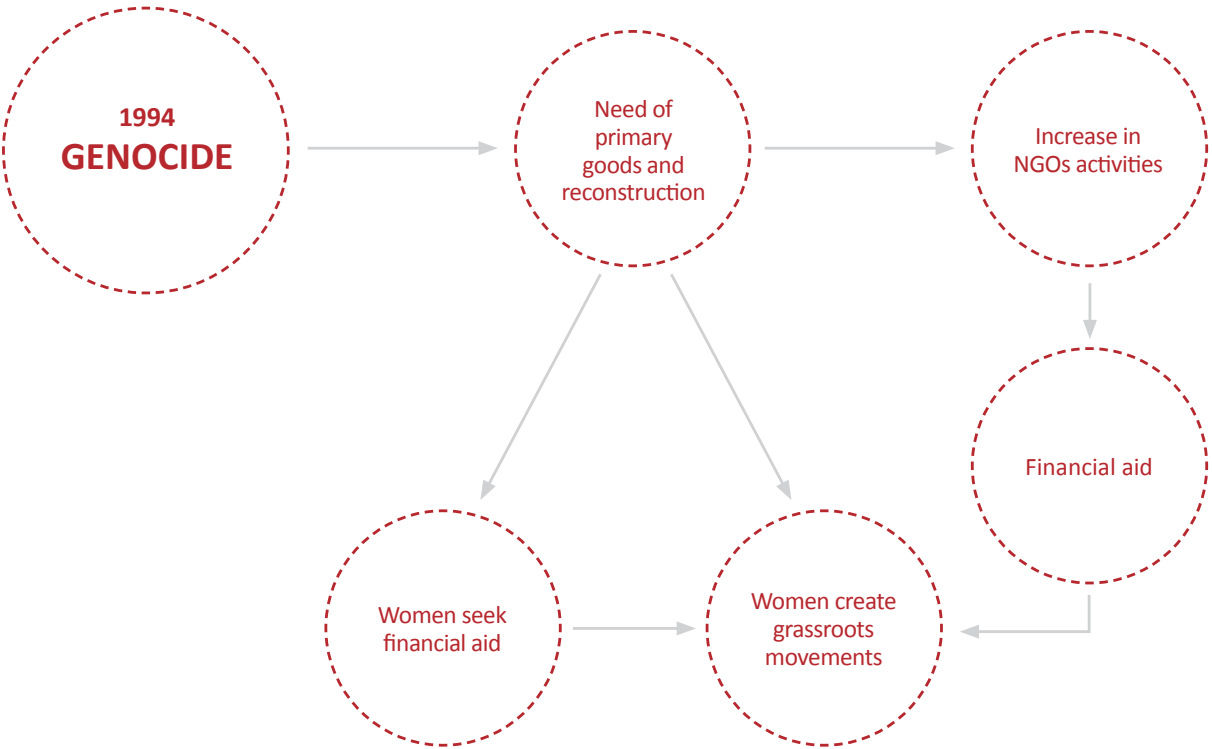
The structures in Rwanda have been arranged to appear democratic in what it seems a method to attract international founding (Longman, 2006). The lack of transformative nature of this autocratic regime jeopardises the opportunity for a truly transformation of gender relations. Furthermore, the infatuation for quantitative targets from both local and international policy-makers "leads to blind implementation of result-oriented policies that fail to address deeply

ingrained societal norms, practices and power structures within which gender inequalities are embedded" (Debusscher & Ansoms, 2013).

The Rwandan gender paradox arises from the inadequacy of a vertical up-bottom structure promoted by the national government where civil society and grassroots movements have been limited; and an international development system who prevails economic growth rather that social growth. A symbiosis that has led to the maintenance of an autocratic regime who has used non-transformative, mainstream and anti-social gender equality policies to stay in power and gain the favour of the international community.

7. Proposal

The use of women in Rwanda has been instrumental by both the national government and the international system. For the former, the introduction of gender polices has served not only for legitimising an autocratic regime under the notion of modernisation and female empowerment, but also to sustain an economy that perpetuates this technocratic Tutsi elite. For the latter, it is part of an economic rationale which capitalises women with the focus of returning and increase the investments made, instead of addressing the necessary dismantling of the structures that perpetuate this inequality.

There is a need for long term strategies which disintegrates "the structure of inequality between genders, classes and nations" (Moser, 1989). The target of particular groups of women and the attempt of introducing them to paid labour has not necessarily mean an improvement for their conditions since the "triple role" they maintain in society has not been addressed. This has been a top-down composition in which International Organisation have set a series of standards in which founding recipients' manoeuvre. The fixation on quantitative results have led to a lack of qualitative understanding of the repercussions certain polices have in the female population. Rights by their mere existence are of little use if they are not followed by an empowering movement for their holders.

Thereupon, if we are to truly combat gender inequality it is necessary that the international community embraces an *empowerment approach*: "the empowerment approach acknowledges inequalities between men and women, and the origins of women's subordination in the family. It also emphasizes the fact that women experience oppression differently according to their race, class, colonial history and current position in the international economic order" (Moser, 1989).

By addressing the triple role that women are submitted to it recognizes that females have confront oppressive structures synchronously at different levels, and sensitises the need for a strong core of women's organisations that can turn this up to bottom hierarchy to a more horizontal one. This is particularly important in developing countries whereas civil society is limited by the lack of a democratic government and the intrusion of poorly planned development and founding initiatives. Withal, the empowerment approach remains largely unsupported due to its challenging nature against the status quo perpetuated by the international system.

To interrupt this circle of physical, structural and cultural violence, and to promote the rights of women, there is an imperious need to advocate for vital freedoms with the support of political, environmental, and fundamentally, social policies which might promote vulnerable women to recognise their own agency. Change would only happen when we create an environment in which women and girls from vulnerability can take active charge of their lives.

8. Conclusion

Through this thesis we have discussed the feminist policy making of Rwanda. As aforementioned, Rwanda has become an example for gender- based policies and reconstruction after the terrible genocide which desolate the country in 1994. The state has become the parliament with more female leaders in the world, and the laws enforced in the territory have been pioneers in the area. However, these victories are bittersweet. Rwanda is still facing a segregated society, based not only in ethnicity, but economic inequality.

The experiences lived by Rwandan women through the economic spectrum are entirely disparate. Low-income females have suffered the consequences of an economic efficient rationale which have relegate them to poorly paid jobs, victims of a productive society which does not provide with the sufficient means for a thriving gender equal society.

In addition, this paper has engaged with the fundamental role that gender studies play in policy development both nationally and in the international sphere. The crucial importance that there is in creating a worldwide academia and knowledge which instigates for a more equal society, both in terms of gender and economy. A society which is willing to dismantle colonised patriarchal narratives which have undermined development for so long and engage in critical an plural understanding of the world and those who dwell in it.

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