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**WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT IN THE POST-1994 RWANDA. THE CASE
STUDY OF MAYAGA REGION**

BY

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ABSTRACT

This research looks at the process of women's empowerment in post- 1994 Rwanda, with special focus on twelve cooperatives working in Mayaga region and the way these cooperatives empower women, their households and the community at large. Traditional Rwandan society has been always bound by patriarchy which has not valued the reproductive roles of women as economically productive in their households and the society as a whole. On the one hand, this understanding was reversed in the post-1994 Rwanda by the commitment of the government to gender equality at the highest level of political leadership through progressive policies and legislation. On the other hand, in Mayaga region, cooperatives brought about socio-economic development and changed relationships of gender and power in a patriarchal post-conflict society.

The findings from cooperatives in Mayaga region show that to prevent women from reaching their full potential is economic folly. If women are empowered, they can generate important development outcomes such as improved health, education, income levels and conflict resolution. The findings further indicate how women's empowerment is determined by the livelihood strategies women adopt themselves to respond to their vulnerability, and by the ways in which they express their agency in making a living in a sustainable way, with the available community assets that they have access to (financial, social, human, natural and physical). This research highlights that the accessibility of the community assets used by women in Mayaga region and in Rwanda as a whole is also determined by policies, institutions and processes that are able to influence their livelihoods positively.

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ABBREVIATIONS

ABCD: Asset Based Community Development

BCR: Commercial Bank of Rwanda

BPoA: Beijing Platform of Action

CEDAW: Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

CGIS-UNR: Coast Guard Investigative Service – National University of Rwanda

CIDA: Canadian International Development Agency

CONFIGI”: “Confiture de Gihindamuyaga” or Gihindamuyaga Jam Factory

DHS: Demographic and Health Surveys

DRC: Democratic Republic of Congo

EAC: East Africa Community

EDPRS: Economic Development for Poverty Reduction Strategy

EDPRS: Economic Development for Poverty Reduction Strategy

ELECTROGAZ: Rwandan Water, Electricity and Gas Company

FAO: Food and Agriculture Organisation

Forum of Rwandese Women Caucus (FRWC)

FRWC: Forum of Rwandese Women Caucus

GAD: Gender And Development

GBV: Gender-Based Violence

GDI: Gender-related Development Index

GDI: Gender-related development index

GDP: Gross Domestic Product

GEORWANDA: Rwandan Geology Company

GoR: Government of Rwanda

HDI: Human Development Index

HPI: Human Poverty Index

ICT: Information and Communication Technology

ILO: International Labour Organisation

IMF: International Monetary Fund

IPR: Institute for Policy Research

IPU: Inter-Parliamentary Union

KIST: Kigali Institute of Sciences and Technology

LABOPHAR: Pharmaceutical Laboratory

MDGs: Millennium Development Goals

MIGEPROF: Ministry of Gender and Family Promotion

MINAGRI: Ministry of Agriculture

MINALOC: Ministry of Local Government

MINECOFIN: Ministry of Economy and Finances

MINISANTE: Ministry of Health

MOWA: Ministry of Women's Affairs

NEPAD: New Partnership for Africa's Development

NGOs: Non- Governmental Organisations

ONAPO: National Office for Population

ONAPO: National Office of Population

ORTPN: Rwandan Office for Tourism and National Parks

PR: proportional representation

PRSP: poverty reduction strategy paper

RDSF: Rwanda Decentralisation Strategic Framework

RWANDATEL: Rwandan Telecommunication Company

RWANDEX: Rwandan Export Company

SAPs: Structural Adjustment Programmes

SLF: Sustainable Livelihoods Framework

SOMUKI: Rwandan Mining Company of Kigali

SORWAL: Rwandan Society/Company for Matches

SORWATHE: Rwandan Society/Company for Tea

SORWATOM: Rwandan Society/Company for Tomatoes

STDs: Sexually Transmitted Diseases

UN: United Nations

UNDP: United Nations Development Programme

UNDP: United Nations Development Programme

UNESCAP: United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

UNFPA: United Nations Population Fund

UNICEF: United Nations Children's Fund

UNICOOPAGI: Agricultural Cooperatives Union of Gikongoro

UNIFEM: United Nations Development Fund For Women

United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF)

UNRISD: United Nations Research Institute for Social Development

WAD: Women And Development

WB: World Bank

WCC: World Council of Churches

WARC: World Alliance of Reformed Churches

WHO: World Health Organization

WID: Women In Development

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

1.1 Background of the Study

This study is concerned with the empowerment of women in post-1994 Rwanda. It examines the role of women's cooperatives in bringing about socio-economic development and changing relationships of gender and power in a patriarchal post-genocide society. The delimitation of the study to the post-1994 period is because people in Rwanda today divide the history of Rwanda into two periods: the period before the 1994 genocide and the period after the 1994 genocide, termed "post-1994 Rwanda". Indeed, in 1994, Rwanda erupted into one of the most appalling cases of mass murder the world has witnessed since World War II. Since then, the 1994 genocide became a term of reference in the history of Rwanda. During the genocide, about one million Tutsi and moderate Hutus were killed in only two months, and all the infrastructure and community capitals (human, financial, natural, physical and social), were destroyed. Indeed, the 1994 genocide destroyed Rwanda's fragile economic base and severely impoverished the population, particularly women. This situation inhibited the country's ability to attract private and external investment, the engine of economic development in any given country, especially in developing countries. In other words, the use of the term "post-1994 Rwanda" means a new beginning of life in Rwanda, or simply a new Rwanda. Some use a theological metaphor, saying that after crucifixion and burial, Rwanda was resurrected after two months in the grave.

The role of women in the post-conflict situation generally and in the households specifically is acknowledged in the Rwandan proverbs and anecdotes. A Rwandan proverb says that "ukurusha umugore akurusha urugo", meaning that if someone has a wiser wife than you, his family's well-being will always be better than yours. A Rwandan anecdote also says that a wife is the heart of the household, "umugore ni umutima w' urugo". Indeed, in the Rwandan context as in many other countries, mostly in rural areas, women do take care of the household by ensuring the availability of the daily basic needs of life. Moreover, the household (of which a woman is the heart) is the basic social and economic unit, and decision-making unit, on which the economy of any given country is founded (Bauer and Mason, 1993, 13-39).

In spite of the central role of women in Rwandan society, the reality is that the key roles played by women in the past and even currently, in social and economic development, are those of productive activities such as domestic labour and reproductive activities where they are responsible for being bearers, carers and the socialisers of the next generation (Gabriel, 1991: 69). These reproductive activities of women are not viewed as work when compared to work done by men, because there is no cash payment attached to them. Women are viewed as facts of life and husbands have to make decisions (Swanepoel, 1996: 64). However, women have proved to be more concerned about the development of their families than men, and as a result, women are viewed as the “principal agents in the fight against poverty” (Perry and Schenck, 2001: 15-20).

In Bezanson and Luxton’s terms (2006), this role of women is expressed as social reproduction (Bezanson and Luxton 2006: 3), which remains the responsibility of women within the households or the families. Social reproduction is defined by Bakker and Gill (2003: 32) in terms of three components. Firstly, biological reproduction related to the procreation of people and social position connected to motherhood. Secondly, the reproduction of the labor force, which is in relation to the daily care of people through education, subsistence, and training. Thirdly, the reproduction of provisioning and caring needs, which is referred to as how the need for resources and care rely on unpaid or paid work in the household or family (Bakker and Gill, 2003: 32). Unfortunately, social reproduction is taken away from economic production and is placed within the household.

In this study, cooperatives are analysed specifically as a tool for women’s empowerment. Cooperatives were introduced in Rwanda as an intervention strategy to eradicate poverty. The current government of Rwanda identified and adopted cooperatives as a strategy to allow communities in rural areas to improve their lives through income-generating projects and through creating jobs for themselves and for the community at large. In Table 1, Mutuyimana and Ntirushwa (1996) show different types of cooperatives, but this study focuses on “cooperatives of producers” (craft industry, livestock breeding and farming).

Table 1: different types of cooperatives

Types of cooperatives	Examples of sectors
<p><i>Financial cooperatives</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • These cooperatives provide services, loans or investments and insurance services to their members. • They are owned by the users members or the insurance subscribers. 	<p><i>Examples of sectors</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Popular funds • Economy funds • COOPECs • Insurance cooperatives • Friendly insurance
<p><i>Cooperatives of Consumers</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They provide goods to their members for their personnel use. • They are owned by the consumers of goods sold by the cooperative. • They operate in different sectors. Their size may vary from small buying groups to super market organizations 	<p><i>Examples of sectors</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • grocery • natural food store • school furniture (stationery, school material, computers and software) • hardware • clothing
<p><i>Cooperatives of services</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They provide services to their members. (individuals or enterprises) • They are owned by services users. • Their size may also vary from small stores to big housing cooperatives 	<p><i>Examples of services</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cable distribution • Community development • Electricity, natural gas • Housing • Nursery • Funeral services • Health care • Transport & communication • Tourism
<p><i>The cooperatives of producers</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • These cooperatives commercialize directly or process and commercialize the products or the services of their members. • Some of them may also sell the inputs necessary to the economic activities of their members (agricultural supply cooperatives) • They are owned by the members who buy their inputs or who supply the products and services to these cooperatives. 	<p><i>Examples of sectors</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Processing & commercialization agricultural cooperatives • Supply to the farm • Craft industry • Breeding and farming • Seeds selection and stocking • Public markets • Fattening parks and pastures • Fisheries • Use of common machineries
<p><i>Workers' cooperatives</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The objective of these cooperatives is to provide jobs to their members by exploiting an enterprise. They may operate in any economic sector. • These cooperatives are owned by their employees-members. • In a cooperative of employees, the members collectively owners get a job and control the 	<p><i>Examples of sectors</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agro-business • Arts and shows • Clothing and clothes selling • Communication and marketing • Construction & renovation • Education • Forestry

management and the administration of their enterprise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Printing & editing • Industrial & manufacturing production • Ambulance services • Services to the enterprises • Home nursing services • Home care
<p><i>Multiple partners cooperatives</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • called also solidarity cooperatives, these regroup different categories of members sharing a common interest within the enterprise: e.g. customers, workers, investors, community institutions 	<p><i>Examples of sectors</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • home services • health services • Enterprises for disabled persons • Community services

Source : Mutuyimana et Ntirushwa, 1996: 3

When we talk about women's empowerment through cooperatives, we also need to understand that the term empowerment has different meanings depending on the socio-cultural and political contexts. Kreisberg (1992) argues that "an exploration of local terms associated with empowerment around the world always leads to lively discussion" (Kreisberg, 1992: 25). Midgley (2003) states that perhaps a reason for this is because empowerment falls within the categories of intangible and non-material elements which involve, among other things, concepts such as self-actualization, capacity-building and social integration (Midgley, 2003:840). Zimmerman (1984) makes it clear that the term empowerment includes "self-strength, control, self-power, self-reliance, own choice, life of dignity in accordance with one's values, capability of fighting for one's rights, independence, own decision making, being free, awakening and capability" (Zimmerman, 1984:169).

In the context of women's empowerment, the researcher understands empowerment in the sense that Zimmermann describes. For decades, women in Rwanda have had little or no influence and have been excluded from decision-making structures. Hence, women's empowerment enables them to acquire the capacity to have informed opinions, to take initiative, to make independent choices and to influence change. However, it also requires that those with power in Rwanda decisively change their attitudes and rules and change the way decisions are made through engaging with previously excluded social groups.

In Rwanda's patriarchal society, women have always had a low status, limiting their authority in decision-making, and by extension, limiting their empowerment and emancipation. Some

examples from other parts of the world show how involving women in the decision-making structures of the society is a cornerstone in the process of their empowerment. According to Camissa and Reingold (2004) “in places as diverse as Timor-Leste, Croatia, Morocco, Rwanda and South Africa, an increase in the number of female lawmakers led to legislation related to antidiscrimination, domestic violence, family codes, inheritance, and child support and protection” (Camissa and Reingold, 2004: 187)

Just five years after the women’s suffrage movement managed to acquire the rights of women to elect and be elected and run for office in Kuwait, the female legislators who were elected in 2010 “introduced new labor laws that would give working mothers mandatory nursing breaks, and provide onsite childcare for companies with more than 200 employees” (Camissa and Reingold: *ibid.* p.193). Camissa and Reingold highlight that “lawmakers tend to see women’s issues more broadly as social issues, possibly as a result of the role that women have traditionally played as mothers and caregivers in their communities, and more women see government as a tool to help serve underrepresented or minority groups” (Camissa and Reingold, *ibid.* p.210). Women lawmakers, therefore, have often been perceived as more insightful to community concerns and more reactive to public needs.

However, Geeta and Anju (2006) highlight that empowering outcomes which include increased income-earning potential, women’s emancipation, ability to bargain for resources within the household, decision-making autonomy, control over fertility, and participation in public life, are only possible for educated women (Geeta and Anju , January 2006: http://www.packard.org/assets/files/population/program%20review/pop_rev_gupta.pdf). For example, Geeta and Anju (2006) found in a review of 59 studies from many different countries, that:

“The level of women’s education associated with a 10 percent decline in the fertility rate varied with the degree of gender stratification. In the most non-egalitarian settings (sub-Saharan African and South Asian countries), only women with some secondary education attained a 10 percent fertility decline, while in the most egalitarian settings (countries in Latin America) a 10 percent fertility decline was attained by women with some primary schooling” (Geeta and Anju , January 2006: *ibid.*).

The control of fertility rate is very important in a small country like Rwanda with an average population density of 260 inhabitants per square kilometer. The connectedness of women’s

education and reduced fertility, reduced infant mortality), and higher earnings from employment are now well recognized. Schultz (1993) found that the level of women's education has impact on the desired family size and on the success in achieving it. Further, he found that each additional year of mother's schooling cut the expected infant mortality rate by 5–10 percent (Schultz, 1993: 79; see also Geeta and Anju, January 2006: *ibid.*)

Nevertheless, despite the relevance of educating women in order to enable them to participate efficiently in decision making, the 2001 Household Living Conditions Survey and the Core Welfare Indicators Questionnaire in Rwanda estimated literacy rates at 48% for women, and 52 percent of women are illiterate. In fact, although there is no gender difference in enrolment rates at the primary school level, research shows higher repetition, dropout and low performance rates for girls as compared to boys. The dropout level of girls is as high as 15.2% as opposed to 7.9% for boys (MIGEPROF: 2005).

1.2 The Problem Statement

The hope for the people of Rwanda in the post-1994 period rests not only on the nation's progress toward political reconciliation and social reconstruction, but also on its potential for sustainable development through different reforms that encompass women's empowerment. This may be achieved through adopting a “community-based development approach”, based on the principles of appreciating and mobilising all individual and community talents, skills and assets, without any discrimination (Kretzmann and McKnight, 1994:35). However, as mentioned in the above points, this approach has always been threatened by patriarchal systems in Rwanda and elsewhere in Africa, where roles have always been distributed based on gender. In the case of Rwanda, this patriarchal attitude has left women behind in development for decades. This has not only affected the livelihoods of women, but has also handicapped the economic development of Rwanda as a whole.

Gender discrimination has negative outcomes on various sectors of society. Taking the example of HIV, it is known that when women lack other means to survive, some of them become involved in risky survival strategies such as the sex trade. One of the negative outcomes is the infection with HIV of young girls and women, due to their vulnerability and their lack of power and means to protect themselves from unsafe sexual relations. This is confirmed by Vandemoortele et.al (2002) who state that studies in Africa show that teenage

girls are 5-6 times more likely to be infected by the HIV virus than boys their age (Vandemoortele et. al, 2002 : UNDP). Given the fact that HIV is sexually transmitted, the boys and men who sleep with sex workers are in turn infected.

Towards overcoming such challenges, the Rwandan government together with some NGOs tried to diminish the level of prostitution by helping sex workers to be grouped in associations and by giving them financial assistance. Later in 2007, when the new policy on cooperatives was approved by the parliament, these associations joined other members of the community to form cooperatives. At the same time as the government was promoting cooperatives, it was promoting the process of women's empowerment through participation in decision making structures. It was particularly effective in giving women higher levels of representation in government. The participatory approach of the government of Rwanda in the process of women's empowerment was effective at some levels, giving women higher levels of representation in government.

The concern of the researcher is how this level of participation impacts on the livelihoods of women in Mayaga region, and in Rwanda as a whole. Despite this high level of representation in government, Enonchong (2003), through the example of Information and Communications Technology (ICT) , shows that women and girls in rural areas of Rwanda are at particular risk of exclusion from this potential opportunity because of poverty, illiteracy, lack of access to education and training and a shortage of time as a result of their multiple roles in families and communities (Enonchong, 2003: <http://www.bpeace.com/projprog>). However, this is not a peculiar challenge for Rwanda. In many African cultures, people still consider women less capable of understanding and operating technologies, or of successfully engaging in science, mathematics and technology.

As far back as the 1960s, Brandt declared that participation without power is an empty and frustrating process for the powerless (Brandt, 2007: 25). Indeed, the principle of empowerment stipulates that people participate because it is their democratic right to do so. In many African societies, participation in decision-making is equated with having access to power. However, participation in political decision-making does not necessarily mean economic empowerment. This research will look at the power and assets that women possess in Rwanda to sustain their livelihoods and contribute to poverty eradication, which is the backbone of the 2020 vision that guides the Rwandan government.

Moreover, this research acknowledges that women need to have access to the determinants of well-being for their empowerment. Oxaal and Baden (1997) argue that factors such as health, welfare and human rights are determinants of well-being whereas the availability of shelter, health care, education facilities, income and capabilities generally are factors that define the accessibility to those determinants of well-being (Oxaal and Baden, 1997:25). The starting point of this research is that it is the capabilities and freedoms that women have, which will facilitate or enable them to use capitals or assets available to them in different ways to improve their wellbeing.

Indeed, Sen highlights that “freedom is the source of development, and freedom and unfreedom are rooted in human capabilities” (Sen, 1999: 87). Sen describes five substantive freedoms necessary for development namely, “political freedom, economic facilities, social opportunities, transparency guarantees and protective security, and each of these distinct types of rights and opportunities help to advance the general capability of a person” (Ibid: 87).

Convinced that women’s freedom is a key issue in the process of women’s empowerment in Rwanda, it is the researcher’s assumption that gender inequality and lack of freedom are key threats to women’s empowerment and to economic development. Women’s exclusion by development planners throughout history has restricted Rwanda’s economic growth and economic development. Indeed, from the researcher’s eight years experience in community development in different provinces of Rwanda, he observed that development programmes and projects which were planned and administered with little insight into gender relations, usually failed to have their intended effects. Hence, to achieve the ambitious vision 2020 and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the Rwandan government needs to overcome the challenges posed by gender inequality and further promote a gender-sensitive approach to development. Thus, gender equality needs to be scrutinized by policy-makers, practitioners, researchers and stakeholders who are engaged in the pursuit of pro-poor and human-centred development generally and women’s empowerment specifically.

In fact, disparities between men and women in basic rights, access to resources, and power to determine their own lives continue to exist in virtually all countries in the world. In the context of Rwanda today, governmental and non-governmental organisations are attempting to overcome gender disparities by ‘engendering development’. This entails focusing on how

the relationship between gender, policy, and development outcomes can improve policy formulation and development- positive outcomes.

Nevertheless, experience shows that the process of women's empowerment also implies some degree of conflict. In fact, empowerment is not just about women acquiring something, but about those holding power relinquishing it. In other words, power relations between women and men are characterised both by co-operation and conflict. Barrientos and Afshar (1999) indicate that, just as women put their efforts together to expand their sense of self-esteem and understanding of the wider context of their lives that empower them and make long-term co-operation possible, so must men undertake a process of reflection and change which makes it possible for them to acknowledge the way in which their power is a double-edged sword (Barrientos and Afshar, (eds) 1999: 230). This means that it is not enough to involve women in decision-making structures; there is also a need to encourage men to change their patriarchal behaviour and to respect their partners' dignity and rights.

1.3 Motivation and Relevance of the Research

It has been said and written in newspapers and in different NGO reports that, in the post-1994 Rwanda, the government has generally achieved tremendous progress in different fields, and women's empowerment specifically has received great attention. In view of this, my motivation is to investigate that achievement, to look at the connectedness between that achievement and the current process of women's empowerment in Rwanda through their involvement in cooperatives, and determine the possible implications for the livelihoods of women, their families, and the society as a whole.

Iyenda (2006) indicates that "research is usually designed to handle a problem, something that needs describing, explaining or improving, or about which more information is needed so that future occurrences can be predicted and policy decided" (Iyenda Guillaume, 2006: <http://civilisations.revues.org/index369.html>). Mouton (1996) argues that social science research aims to generate knowledge about the social world, and adds that in the final instance, all research is aimed at improved understanding, by explaining and evaluating phenomena in the social world (Mouton, 1996: ix). Babbie (2007) shows that social research projects are undertaken for many purposes, and three of the most common and useful purposes are exploration, description and explanation (Babbie, 2007: 37).

The researcher was motivated by his basic training in the field of community development in his country and abroad, and has been intimately involved for seven years in the field of community development in Rwanda, working for different community development organisations (national and international), with a special focus on gender and development. This opportunity provided the researcher with an understanding of the need for women's empowerment.

Moreover, the researcher's four-year postgraduate studies at the University of KwaZulu-Natal in the field of theology and development, where issues of gender and development and rural development were prominently engaged, was a driving force in relation to the researcher's study interest. The theological and developmental engagement during this period of study has further highlighted the need mentioned above. In order to gain more insight into this issue, the researcher's honours thesis focused on gender and development. This choice of research topic was considered appropriate because of being a minister of the church, part of whose daily duty is to engage with people and seek ways of making some positive impact on their lives. Hence, the researcher's study is motivated by the search for better understanding, and to acquire more skills and experience in the field of gender and development, with special focus on women's empowerment. In addition to this, the case of Rwanda holds a special interest for the researcher. Given the fact that Rwanda is rated as the country with the highest level of women's involvement in decision-making structures, the researcher is motivated to investigate if that participation really means that women in Rwanda are empowered.

Apart from the above motivation, this is relevant research that is aimed at making some positive contributions to the already existing body of literature on gender and development, generally, and on women's empowerment specifically. It is unique because it was conducted after the genocide experience in Rwanda. Many research projects of this nature were conducted before the genocide. There are however, some gaps which exist on issues of women's empowerment since the genocide. In fact, in the post-1994 genocide, women nationwide contributed to all pillars of stabilisation and reconstruction operations: security, governance, justice and reconciliation, and socioeconomic development. Thus, the process of women's empowerment was initiated as one of the key issues for reconstruction and development. This research locates the existing gaps in the previous research. It seeks to highlight the new programmes of the "Government of Unity and Reconciliation", the

contribution of the civil society towards women's empowerment since the genocide, and how the government's programme is implemented. The government's programme on women's empowerment before and after the genocide is essentially not the same. As shown above, the issue of women's empowerment is now taken more seriously in the post-1994 Rwanda than before. This therefore has created some gaps for researchers.

Another unique dimension to this research concerns methodology. Previous research used different approaches and methods which seemed not to bring out the assets that women have and which could be used in the process of reconstruction. This particular research focuses on the need to use a research methodology which recognizes not only the role of women in their own empowerment but also show how to use their assets by relying on the approach of Asset Based Community Development (ABCD).

Additionally, the choice of this region is relevant because it is an example of a region where development agencies responded to the need for poor women to earn income by making relatively small investments in income-generating projects between 1988 and 1996. Most of these projects failed because they were motivated by welfare and not development benefits, providing women temporary and part-time employment using traditionally feminine skills such as knitting and sewing, whose market is very limited. In contrast, after 1998, government reforms including land reform were the engine of women's associations towards their emancipation and self-empowerment, and the economic development of the country. This region of Rwanda can thus potentially be seen as a model for women's empowerment.

1.4 Research Questions

In view of the above discussion, the research question is: "What is the extent to which cooperatives empower women in Mayaga region, and what are the possible implications of this for their livelihoods and for the society as a whole?" From this question emerge some sub-questions:

- What are the indicators of women's empowerment in Mayaga region and what is the role played by cooperatives?

- Is there any link between women's participation in decision-making and their empowerment?
- Is there any positive impact of policies, institutions and processes on women's livelihoods in Mayaga region?

1.5 Research Aim and Objectives

The researcher's main aim is to investigate whether and how women's empowerment can be a strategy of reconstruction and economic development in a country like Rwanda, after a devastating genocide.

The objectives of this study are:

- to identify the gap caused by gender discrimination which confronts the present process of building a new Rwanda;
- to investigate how poverty exacerbates gender disparities, and to look at how these disparities disadvantage women and girls and limit their capacity to participate in and benefit from development;
- to ascertain the importance of women's empowerment in the building of sustainable development in Rwanda;
- to measure the extent to which women are empowered in Rwanda, by looking at socio-economic indicators such as health and education, political indicators such as how women are involved in decision-making structures, and by looking at women's vulnerability, investigating how the Rwandan government deals with domestic violence and women abuse, and how it helps women to get out of their poverty situation.

1.6 Research Hypothesis

This study examines the conceptual and empirical links between gender, development and women's empowerment through cooperatives, the implications for the livelihoods of women in Mayaga region, and for the society as a whole. Hence, the study tests the assumption that patriarchal systems can impede women's rights and retard societal development, and that

ignoring gender disparities comes at great cost to people's wellbeing and inhibits the building of sustainable economies. Conversely, women's empowerment through participation in cooperatives can not only result in positive improvements in livelihoods, but also may result in significant changes in patriarchal power relations. This was tested by looking at the achievements of women working in cooperatives in Mayaga region, and how these achievements impact positively on the livelihoods of women in Mayaga, the society and the country as a whole.

1.7 Outline of the study

This study consists of six chapters. Chapter one introduces the study, outlines the research problem and highlights the relevance of the study and the motivation of the researcher to undertake such a study. The research question and the aims and objectives are outlined.

Chapter two provides the theoretical and methodological framework for the study. The literature on gender, gender and development, and women's empowerment is reviewed. The factors that fuel gender inequality and the historical background of the involvement of the international community in women's empowerment process around the world is mentioned. The methodological frameworks used for data analysis are presented in-depth. The Sustainable Livelihoods Framework, Asset-Based Community Development, and the "dialogical action" approach, are presented and explained. It is indicated how these three theories have a common denominator, which is the centrality and the agency of people in their development and the creation of sustainable livelihoods.

Chapter three presents the research design. This chapter outlines the methodology and presents the research methods used to collect data during fieldwork in the Mayaga region. The delimitation of the study and the motivation for selection of Mayaga region as a case study are presented. Ethic issues taken into consideration in the process of data collection are outlined.

Chapter four presents the context of the research, in post -1994 Rwanda. It outlines the interrelated processes of reconstruction, development and women's empowerment in the post- 1994 period. It indicates that in the process of post-genocide reconstruction, women's empowerment was prioritized by the government of unity and reconciliation and further

outlines how policies on gender-based violence, women's empowerment and decentralization initiated by the government have contributed to the recovery of Rwanda and to the livelihoods of its people. Chapter four also discusses the economy and cooperatives in Rwanda generally and in the Southern Province specifically. This chapter highlights how, by stimulating the production and fair distribution of wealth among its members, cooperatives contribute to the improvement of the community life conditions and welfare, and by extension, contribute to welfare of the society as a whole.

Chapter five, which is the analysis of the research findings, introduces the concept of livelihood assets, explores the context that makes women vulnerable to poverty, identifies the strategies that women use to build assets, and sketches the general stages that women go through as they move towards a sustainable livelihood through cooperatives in Mayaga region. Chapter five further indicates how, through cooperatives, women's livelihood strategies facilitate the development of their assets and capabilities, supporting them to move beyond basic income generation towards increased economic resilience.

Finally, chapter five chapter highlights how women in Mayaga region adjust their livelihood strategies and develop coping and adaptive strategies in response to external shocks and stresses, and further shows how women's access to community capitals (financial, social, human, natural and physical) is often affected by the social or cultural situation and the environmental conditions of Mayaga region and Rwanda in which women are living.

Chapter six presents the conclusions arising from the data analysis and draws some general conclusions. Some recommendations are made for women in cooperatives in Mayaga region and by extension, women involved in cooperatives in Rwanda and in Africa as a whole. Recommendations are also made to the Rwandan government and the international community.

CHAPTER TWO: THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Theoretical framework: Gender relations, and gender and development

2.1.1 Introduction

In recent years, gender relations, gender and development and women's empowerment have become issues of major national and international significance in many countries across Africa and the world as a whole, and conventions regulating affairs affecting women have been spread as part of 'international law'¹ (Nussbaum, 2005: 241-259). These issues are not a concern just of the individual societies or countries, but a global concern, given the fact that the exploitation and oppression of women are not just accidental phenomena but are intrinsic parts of a system, a system which, moreover, has existed for many centuries and which has penetrated and been structured in all civilisations and cultures around the world. While feminists affirm that "giving women greater access to resources would contribute to an equitable and efficient development process" (Barrientos and Afshar, (eds) 1999: 3 -4), this chapter discusses how development requires more than the creation of opportunities for women to earn sustainable livelihoods - it also requires the creation of a conducive environment for men and women to seize those opportunities, and societies that give men and women equal voices in decision-making and policy implementation.

Thus, there is a need to shift from the development paradigm as defined by Western policy-makers to a new development paradigm which is human-centered, coming from within. The argument made in this chapter is that the centre of effort in development needs to shift from resource-based strategies to interactive or participative strategies. Community-driven development, participatory planning and other fine-sounding initiatives that make claims of full participation and empowerment of women can benefit some women with some power, while leaving the least powerful without a voice or much in the way of choice. Hence, the argument is that empowerment of marginalised groups requires a structural transformation of economic and political relations towards a radically democratised society.

¹ For instance, "Article 1 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) prohibits any discrimination, exclusion or restriction based on sex" (JSTOR, AGENDA, No 54 (2002): 99-105)

2.1.2 Overview of gender and feminist theory

2.1.2.1 Definition of gender

Gender refers to the social relationships governing the sexes. Chant (1997) defines gender as “a broad ranging concept, encompassing the unequal relationships between women and men, which are ameliorated and influenced by a range of factors such as age, geography, the means of generation of wealth, religious and traditional norms or government policies, and culturally and socially shaped” (Chant, 1997: 19). Additionally, Moser (1993) argues that “the social relations of gender seek to make apparent and explain the asymmetry that appears in male/female relations in terms of power sharing, decision-making, the division of labour, and return on labour both within the household and in the society at large” (Moser, 1993: 39).

In other words, gender is a social meaning given to the biological and physical differences between the sexes and includes a set of qualities, roles and behaviours expected of a male or female by the society. In the Rwandan culture, people have always assumed that there are fairly substantial innate sex differences in body form that explain why men generally show superior performance in tasks reflecting strength or athletic ability. Such assumptions have powerful personal and social consequences. Women in Rwanda were not allowed to participate in some traditional sports like “urukiramende” which requires jumping over 1metre high; and yet women could get into the traditional bed called “urutara” – which is about 1.5 m high - without a ladder!

Indeed, while different attitudes toward our bodies constitute a basic part of our self-identification as feminine or masculine, these attitudes are also contradictory, given the fact that some women are stronger than men. Rwandan anecdotes illustrate how weak men have always found reasons for being challenged by women. For instance “naho miseke ndarwana” is an anecdote about a man who fought against his wife, and when the man lost the battle, the excuse was that he was fighting against two people (because his wife was pregnant). This was only a pretext to say that when a woman is stronger than a man, this is something unusual, even unnatural. Duley and Edwards (1986) state that “stereotypes about sex differences in

strength have affected not only women's participation in various physical activities, but also the kinds of exercise and job thought suitable to them" (Duley and Edwards, 1986: 269).

Controversially, in many countries around the world, although many women work at jobs where a great deal of strength is needed (such as nursing, which involves the lifting of sick and sometimes obese adults), still the image of the fragile female is used to keep women out of various higher-paying occupations, such as construction work or heavy industry. Nevertheless, it is becoming clear that the idea that physical differences in strength can be used to explain differences in social position is erroneous. In fact, Maccoby and Jacklin (1974) highlight that "most male occupations, particularly those with prestige and power such as corporate executive, politician, doctor, or army officer, do not require physical strength" (Maccoby and Jacklin, 1974: 307-311). The reality in our societies is that men's presumed greater innate physical strength has come to function as a symbol of greater male social power.

The Kinyarwanda proverb "umugabo wigize imbwa aravoma" or "only a man who treats himself as a dog can fetch water" (because fetching water in the Rwandan culture has always been a role of women and children), shows that men could simply be finding a pretext to escape hard work in the name of culture. Fetching water in some rural areas in Rwanda is very hard work, in that sometimes women carry about 30 litres of water for approximately 10 km. Young (1988) makes it clear that "by using gender, we are using a shorthand term which encodes a very crucial point: that our basic social identities as men and women are socially constructed rather than based on fixed biological characteristics" (Young, 1988: 60).

Both men and women are biological beings but women's subordination is socially constructed and not biologically determined. The international Development Research Centre (2010) shows that to "conceptually differentiate between these two realities, it is necessary to identify sex as the biological differentiation between male and female, and gender as the differentiation between masculinity and femininity as constructed through socialization and education, among other factors (International Development Research Centre, 2010: <http://www.crdi.ca/books/focus/910/03-chp02.html>). Young (1998) adds that "what is biological is fixed and unchangeable, but what is social is subject to change and should be the focus of attention for feminist theorists" (Young, 1988: 175).

As supplement to the argument of Young, a report from the FAO (1997) mentions that “gender roles are socially, not biologically ascribed roles of women and men, which can vary between different societies and cultures, classes and ages, and throughout different periods in history” (FAO, 1997: 11). The report continues by highlighting that gender-specific roles and responsibilities are often “conditioned by household structure, access to resources, and the specific impacts of the global economy, and other locally relevant factors such as ecological conditions” (FAO, 1997: 13).

Taken in the context of the household, Webb (1989) states that gender refers to the relationships between men and women and children, “over time and in different contexts, whereby these relationships are shaped, formally or informally and by laws, rules, norms, practices, expectations and coercion” (Webb, 1989: 67). Indeed, Beneria and Savitri (1996) indicate that gender relationships are formally structured within institutions, “such as those of the nation state, religious orders and the family, and gender theorists recognise the family as an institutionalised realm of gender relationships wherein roles and responsibilities are clearly defined and governed by an overarching power structure”(Beneria and Savitri, 1996: 46). This is applicable in various manifestation of the family, whether as an extended unit or the spatially defined household unit.

The construction of gendered power relations in the household is illustrated in Rwanda by the concept of “Nyampinga” (someone at the top of the hill). Young women are also called “umutima w’ urugo” or ‘the heart of the household’. In Kinyarwanda language, “Nyampinga” means someone staying at home to care for the household’s members and visitors. This term is applied to young women in Rwanda and implies that women are the cornerstone of household survival. While this affectionate term is considered complementary by the Rwandan girls, this understanding was the root cause of the lack of freedom for women to seek employment outside the space of the family, in the name of culture. Although this sounds like something that happened years ago in the traditional Rwandan society, even in today’s modern Rwanda, when some men earn enough income for the maintenance of the family, they prefer to keep their wives at home to care for children, to welcome visitors and to wash and iron their clothes.

When the first feminist activists launched protests against gender-based violence and gender inequality in Rwanda in the 1990s, this was not considered by patriarchal Rwandan men as a challenge to patriarchal systems, but as a direct attack on them. That is why in Rwanda, the

definition of gender equality by men at its early stage was “akateye” which means a fatal or strange event that comes in the society. In fact, from the term “akateye” is the verb “gutura” meaning to attack or provoke. In other words, patriarchal men in Rwanda viewed the claim for gender equality by women as an attack on both men and culture. Women engaging in smoking, drinking publicly or eating goat’s meat, which were considered taboo in the past, was considered a direct attack on Rwandan culture.

Some Rwandan men view gender equality as an ‘outsiders’ lifestyle’ and a system of acculturation. Nevertheless, anthropologist Kottak (2008) makes it clear that “it is not too much to say that there is no person whose customs have developed uninfluenced by foreign culture or that has not borrowed arts and ideas which it has developed in its own way” (Kottack, 2008: <http://www.psc.isr.umich.edu/pubs/abs/5324>). We cannot ignore, however, that “acculturation has often been conceived to be a unidimensional, zero-sum cultural conflict in which the minority's culture is displaced by the dominant group's culture in a process of assimilation” (Rudmin, August 1996). It is not only men who are sometimes confused about the real meaning of gender equality. Some women in Rwanda define equality by the expression “burya si buno” or “this is the present, not the past”, an expression which does not sound good to men who understand the expression as humiliating. Additionally, Zile (1987) challenges the way women sometimes define themselves and their issues. Zile argues that women always speak up in their capacity as mothers or wives, acting for the sake of their husbands and children, but “they never articulate their issues as citizens, who happen to be women, and are therefore entitled to equality. By limiting their self-definition to their roles as child-raisers and home-makers they are clinging to some of the very stereotypes that perpetrate their oppression” (Zile, 1987: 65-67).

2.1.2.2 Overview of global gender issues

Virtually all ancient societies around the world relegated women to a subordinate status and justified their treatment as an inevitable outgrowth of their natural inferiority. In fact, Dyer (1977) shows that since the beginning of recorded history; “philosophers, theologians, and scientists have pronounced women’s ‘natural’ inferiority, thus sanctioning and perpetuating their limited and debased status” (Olfman, 1994: 259 – 271). Sigmund Freud's theory of female development follows in this tradition. Freud construed femininity as a deficiency disease (Dyer, 1977: 325-339). Freud’s theory, together with previous and later theories,

contributed to discrimination against women all over the world. Looking at the statistics below, one can argue that gender imbalances have to be taken seriously if sustainable development is to be achieved:

- As Maguire (1984) shows, “women and girls who constitute 52% of the world’s population are counted as 33% of the official labor force, yet they perform 67% of all hours worked” (Maguire, 1984: 1). Maguire adds that females receive only 10% of the world’s income and own less than 1% of the world’s real property. Furthermore, of the 1.3 billion people who live in absolute poverty around the globe, 70 percent are women (Maguire, *ibid.* p.2). For these women, poverty does not just mean scarcity and want. It means rights denied, opportunities curtailed and voices silenced.
- Quisumbing and Benedicte (2000) show that women work two-thirds of the world’s working hours, and that the overwhelming majority of the labour that sustains life in the households - such as farming, cooking food, caring for children and the elderly, the maintenance of the house, fetching water - is done by women; universally this work is accorded low status and no pay (Quisumbing and Benedicte, 2000: 49)
- Hill and King (1995) show that despite the recognition that education is among the most important drivers of human development, “women make up two-thirds of the estimated 876 million adults worldwide who cannot read or write; and girls make up 60 percent of the 77 million children not attending primary school” (Hill and King, 1995: 68). Furthermore, women earn only 10 percent of the world’s income. Where women work for money, they may be limited to a set of jobs deemed suitable for women – invariably low-pay, low-status positions (Hill and King, *ibid.*)
- Morley and Lovel (1986) state that “the average age of marriage for a woman in Africa is 17, African women bear their first child on average at age 19, and their last child at age 37 and African women have, on average, 7 children” (Morley and Lovel (1986: 60). Furthermore, they state that the average life expectancy of women in Africa is 60 years; sadly since 1986, AIDS has reduced the life expectancy significantly. They add that women and girls constitute the majority of the world’s 16 million refugees and that women in Africa have less access to education than men; 40% of all girls of primary school age in Africa are not attending school.

Paradoxically, women are the main educators in African households, and 30% of all households in Africa are headed by women (Morley and Lovel, 1986: 61).

- WHO (World Health Organization) data indicates that in Afghanistan and Sierra Leone, a woman's lifetime chance of dying in childbirth is one in seven; in the United States it is one in 3 418, and in Norway and Switzerland, one in 7 300. WHO data also shows that "in any given year, 15 percent of all pregnant women will face a life-threatening complication and more than 500 000 – 99 percent of them in the developing world – will die" (World Health Organisation, 2003: 138, cited by Care International: <http://www.care.org/newsroom/publications/whitepapers/>). Just to add, WHO highlights that "some 130 million girls and women, mostly in sub-Saharan Africa, have been subjected to genital cutting at the behest of their parents, and 2 million more face the blade every year, according to the United Nations Population Fund" (Ibid. p. 139).
- Wolff, Brent, Blanc, and Gage (2000) inform that "up to 800 000 people are trafficked across international borders annually: 80 percent of these are women and girls, and the majority is forced into the sex trade, and in the midst of conflict and natural disaster in countries around the world, women's risk of violence skyrockets" (Wolff, Blanc and Gage, 2000: 305). They add that systematic rape as a weapon of war has left millions of girls and women traumatized, forcibly impregnated, and/or HIV positive. These factors combined explain why today more women than men around the world are HIV positive. In sub-Saharan Africa, more than twice as many young women as young men are living with HIV, according to the International Labor Organization (Wolff, Brent, Blanc, and Gage, 2000: 303-322)
- In Rwanda, among 15-49 year olds, women are 1.5 times more infected by HIV than men (men: 2.3 percent, women: 3.6 percent) while among 15-24 year olds, there is a five-fold difference in infection between men and women (men: 0.5 percent, women: 2.5 percent) (DHS Survey, 2005)
- In South Africa, by 2006 the official figure for rape was over 55 000; unofficially, based on the premise put forward by the National Institute of Crime Rehabilitation that only one in twenty rapes are reported, the figure is over 494 000 a year. This

means that on average approximately one thousand three hundred women can be expected to be raped every day in South Africa. A study by Interpol, the international police agency, has revealed that South Africa leads the world in rapes. A woman was raped in South Africa every 17 seconds. This did not include the number of child rape victims. It was estimated that one in every two women would be raped (Rape Statistics – South Africa and Worldwide, 2006: <http://www.rape.co.za/>)

These are only a very few examples. The reality shown by the above statistics is that gender discrimination is not only a development issue, but is also a human rights violation. Human rights provide a means of empowering all people to make decisions about their own lives rather than being the passive objects of choices made on their behalf (Eyben, 2004: 2). Tackling poverty and vulnerability requires giving the poor and vulnerable a stake, a voice and real protection in the societies where they live. Clearly, this is not only about expanding people's choices and capabilities, but above all about the empowerment of people to decide what this process of expansion should look like. Although culture is a cornerstone of gender discrimination, there are others factors that fuel it, as will be discussed below.

2.1.2.3 Factors that fuel gender discrimination

i. Patriarchal systems

Patriarchy is a "social organization marked by the supremacy of the father in the clan or family, the legal dependence of wives and children, and the reckoning of descent and inheritance in the male line and broadly, control by men of a disproportionately large share of power" (Malhotra, Vanneman and Kishor, 1995: 287). The patriarchal mindset is manifested by violent forms of domination. This happens in all dimensions of human life, including family, society, religion, and the human interaction with nature. Gough (1975) argues that some of the fundamental ways in which men exercise social, political, sexual and economic control over women's lives across lines of culture, class and race can be outlined in broad terms as:

“...men's ability to deny women their sexuality or force it upon them; to command or exploit their labour or control their produce; to control or rob them of their children; to confine them physically and

prevent their movements; or to withhold from them large areas of the society's knowledge or cultural attainments" (Gough, 1975: 34)

Patriarchy, then, is the ideology of male supremacy that results from the social construction of gender which in turn justifies the social, economic and political distinctions between men and women (Okome, 2003). Bazilli (1991) shows that "while feminist theorists have debated the various historical and material conditions that have created, or resulted from, these distinctions, the term patriarchy remains the most useful description and is the one that is most often used" (Bazilli,1991: 9). Thus, patriarchy is an ideology and a social hierarchy. The World Social Forum (Mumbai, 2004) states that, "based on the assertion of superiority of elite men towards other men and of all men towards women it has historically dominated the world, its resources and ideas, and continues to do so as it gives control and advantages to men that it withholds from women and vulnerable groups" (World Social Forum, Mumbai 2004: <http://pdhre.igc.org/WSF-position-paper.html>). Cagatay and Ozler (1995) highlight that patriarchy has historically taken many different forms, dominated social organization and "exerted control over all human institutions including the political, economic, and knowledge systems, which in turn perpetuate and reinforce patriarchy" (Cagatay and Ozler, 1995: 78).

It can be argued that "freedom from oppression in all its forms cannot be realized as long as we continue to work through institutions, language and ideas that are fundamentally grounded in the ideology of patriarchy" (World Social Forum, Mumbai, 2004: *ibid*). In whatever its cultural or historic setting, Duley and Edwards (1986) highlight that patriarchy is characterised by hierarchies, that divide and separate human beings "by categories of gender, class, economic status and political power, categories as defined by the patriarchy, locating all men and women in particular places in the patriarchal hierarchy" (Duley and Edwards, 1986: 79). Hierarchy is most visible in public institutions, which lead economic and political affairs and attribute higher social and cultural value to powerful men. Indeed, patriarchy has created institutional structures to maintain and reinforce itself and the culture that arises from these structures. In some African communities like Rwanda, Uganda, DR Congo and Burundi, a very small minority of women have always been accepted into policy and decision-making positions, so long as they do not challenge the fundamentally patriarchal order.

The Rwandan proverb “Iyo amazi abaye macye ahahirwa imfizi” or “when there is a shortage of water, the little which is there is left to the bull” illustrates the reality in traditional Rwandan society. When there is a shortage of food, parents make sure that all the boys are served before moving to the girls. In the same way, when there is a shortage of school fees, boys are first sent to school while girls stay at home to help their mothers with cooking, fetching water, caring for cattle and farming. This behaviour is a proof that men in Rwanda still have a monopoly of power that enables them to control resources and establish social and cultural values that serve their interests. Lindsay and Miescher (2003) believe that “partial improvements within the system of oppression do not change the paradigm, and that racial equality will be possible only if all the other inequalities are being dealt with, patriarchal inequality included” (Lindsay and Miescher, 2003: 31).

Lindsay and Miescher (2003) further highlight that human rights gives an alternative organizing principle and has the capacity to spread out a new narrative that would help to go beyond the divisions of the present patriarchal order with a new level of common human identity grounded in the organising principle of universal human dignity and the assertion of the equal human value of human beings in all their diversities and differences (Lindsay and Miescher, 2003:30-33). Their hypothesis is that to realise this potential, all societies must not only become critically aware of the nature and consequences of patriarchy, “they must also be educated in the meaning, purposes, standards and mechanisms for the realisation of universal human rights” (Lindsay and Miescher, Ibid. p37).

ii. The factor of culture

In addressing gender in any country, especially in Africa, understanding the historical and cultural contexts is fundamental. The failure to consider cultural context accounts for misconceptions about the relevance of feminism in many African societies. The Mexico World Conference on Cultural Policies (1982) defined culture as “the whole complex of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features that characterize a society or a social group. It includes not only arts and letters, but also modes of life, the fundamental rights of the human being, value systems, traditions and beliefs” (Mexico, 1982). However, the same conference raised the idea of how culture is more than that, and “extends to being part of the fabric of every society and shaping the way things are done and our understanding of why this should be so” (Mexico, *ibid.*)

Schalkwyk (2000) shows that gender identities and gender relations are critical aspects of culture because they shape the way daily life is lived in the family, but also in the wider community and the workplace. In fact, gender (like race or ethnicity) functions as an organising principle for society because of the cultural meanings given to being male or female (Schalkwyk, 2000: <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/2/9/1896320.pdf>). The Rwandan proverbs “umukobwa w’ igicucu yirahira imfizi ya se” meaning “only a foolish girl can compare herself to her father” and “Ingabo y’ umugore iragushora ntigukura” meaning that “a women soldier can open a front but not fight it” show that Rwandans believed that a girl could not perform some duties of men. Cagatay and Ozler (1995) show that this is evident in the division of labour according to gender, and that in most societies there are clear patterns of “women’s work” and “men’s work,” both in the household and in the wider community – and cultural explanations of why this should be so (Cagatay and Ozler, 1995: 27). However, “the patterns and the explanations vary according to the context and among societies and change over time. While the specific nature of gender relations differs among societies, the reality is that women have less personal autonomy, fewer resources at their disposal, and limited influence over the decision-making processes that shape their societies and their own lives. This pattern of disparity based on gender is both a human rights and a development issue (CIDA: Canadian International Development Agency, 2010: http://dsp-psd.pwgsc.gc.ca/collections/collection_2010/acdi-cida/). By contrast, when women gain resources and autonomy, they thereby change gender relations. In other words, gender discrimination based on cultural practices can change as women’s economic position changes.

Culture is not static. Swart-Kruger and Richter (1997) argue that “cultures and traditions are living entities that are continually being renewed and reshaped..... as with culture more generally, gender definitions change over time” (Swart-Kruger and Richter, 1997: 957-966). In fact, change is shaped by many factors. In the post- 1994 Rwanda, cultural change occurs as Rwandan communities and households respond to social and economic shifts associated with globalization, new technologies, environmental pressures, genocide consequences and development projects.

For example, changes in trade policy in Rwanda allowed for the growth of the garment industry, which drew large numbers of women into the urban labour force. This process has

involved a reinterpretation of the norms of female by the women entering this employment and by their families. The much greater visibility of women in cities such as Kigali and Butare is also influencing public perceptions of possible female roles in the family and the workplace. Another tangible example, in the post-1994 Rwanda, is that women were involved in driving public transport, and were found being building contractors, both fields where women had no place before 1994. In view of this, there is no doubt that women's roles as determined by a specific culture tend to change dramatically and rapidly when there is economic pressure resulting from warfare or other forms of dislocation of men from production – the most famous example of this is the USA in WWII, when women became engineers etc as men were drafted into the army (Schalkwyk, 2000: *ibid.*). The problem was that, “women were expected to return to their everyday housework once men returned from the war. Most women opted to do this. Later many women chose to return to traditional work such as clerical or administration positions. Some of these women continued working in the factories” (Wikipedia: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rosie_the_Riveter).

In addition, “change also results from deliberate efforts to influence values through changes in the law or government policy, often due to pressure from civil society. There are many examples of efforts to influence attitudes about race relations, the rights of workers and the use of the environment, to name three areas in which cultural values shape behavior” (Schalkwyk, 2000: *ibid*: p1.).

Thus, culture is defined or formed through a process in which some segments of society value change through advocacy and example, while others resist such change. In other words, societies are not homogeneous and no assumptions can be made about a consensus on cultural values.

As we are dealing with a gender and development research, another question is whether development initiatives are culturally-neutral. Development is about change. Development initiatives (by governments, NGOs or development agencies) are investments in promoting social and economic change. Schalkwyk (2000) highlights that some development initiatives aim “to change values and practices that shape social relations – consider, for example, the investments made in family planning and what this implies about family structures” (Schalkwyk, June 2000:1), and Beneria and Savitri (1996) indicates that development models also incorporate cultural values – consider, “for example, the concern with the transition to

market economies, and the support for private property as a cultural value” (Beneria and Savitri, 1996: 74).

In the last twenty years, gender studies have been enriched with the development of an additional focus on men and masculinity, which is also a product of culture. World Health Organisation/WHO (2003) shows that in Africa, “the association of masculinity with violence and risky behavior has important implications for the efforts of development agencies and governments to reduce violence, vulnerability to civil conflict and the spread of the HIV/AIDS pandemic” (WHO, 2003: 27). A gender analysis of young men must consider the plurality of masculinities in sub-Saharan Africa. According to Pool and Hart et al (eds) (2000), versions of manhood in Africa are: “(i) socially constructed; (ii) fluid over time and in different settings; and (iii) plural, and that there is no typical young man in sub-Saharan Africa and no single African version of manhood” (Pool and Hart, et al (eds), 2000: 197-212). They highlight that “there are numerous African masculinities, urban and rural, and changing historically, including versions of manhood associated with war, or being warriors and others associated with farming or cattle-herding” (Pool and Hart, et al (eds), *ibid.*). The reality in our African societies is that there are indigenous definitions and versions of manhood, defined by tribal and ethnic group practices, and newer versions of manhood shaped by Islam and Christianity, and by Western influences, including the global media.

A landmark in the development of the concept of masculinity was introduced by Ouzgane and Morrel (2005) who developed the concept of “hemogenic masculinity” as a form of masculinity that was “dominant in society, established the cultural ideal for what it was to be a man, silenced other masculinity, and combated alternative visions of masculinity” (Ouzgane and Morrell, 2005: 4). A starting point of much of the work of Ouzgane and Morrell (2005) is the rejection of the idea that all men are the same. This has occasioned the shift from the concept of masculinity to the concept of masculinities. The shift allows one to distinguish meaningfully among different collective constructions of masculinity and to identify power inequalities among these constructions. Put differently, the concept provides a way to understand the evident fact that not all men have the same amount or type of power, the same opportunities, and, consequently, the same life trajectories (Ouzgane and Morrell, 2005: 4).

On the other hand, psychologists like Sterling (1992), mention a list of traits associated with masculinity, which include “being aggressive, individualistic, self-reliant, self-sufficient, strong, competitive, athletic, ambitious, analytical, assertive, dominant, independent, and forceful” (Sterling, 1992: 269). It is worth noting that gender-biased roles and “essentialist” theories² have limitations since they suggest that men’s lives are pre-determined and that therefore men cannot act otherwise. Essentialist understandings of men assume that masculinity is unchanging and common to all men.

iii. The factor of religious beliefs

In a country where about 90% of the population is Christian, we cannot ignore the impact of religion on shaping gender relations. A relevant question is whether “religions play a spiritual liberating or spiritual oppressive role in women’s lives” (Gcabashe, 1995: 7). Another fundamental question is whether one can talk about spiritual liberation, given the fact that “the masculine identity of God has led to a denial and rejection of women and feminine principles” (Ibid.). In fact, religious communities or churches have failed to challenge patriarchy which is controversially supported by most of the faith-based literature, especially Christian scriptures. Indeed, the Bible which most Christians, and by extension which most Rwandans believe in, states boldly that women should be submissive to men (Ephesians 5, 21-32) and that men only should preach or talk in public places (1 Timothy 2: 11-12). Such religious beliefs, when combined with other patriarchal cultural practices and beliefs as described above, pose an enormous challenge to women’s empowerment and the ameliorating of gender inequality in Rwanda. In fact, churches have been complicit in gender disparity, discrimination and violence because they have failed to engage patriarchy critically. As a matter of fact, it has taken the Anglican Church of Rwanda 50 years to ordain the first woman priest³.

² In Philosophy, essentialism is the view that, “for any specific kind of entity, there is a set of characteristics or properties all of which any entity of that kind must possess” (Hirschfeld, 1998). Therefore all things can be precisely defined or described. In simple terms, essentialism is a generalization stating that certain properties possessed by a group (e.g. people, things, ideas) “are universal and not dependent on context” (Hirschfeld, *ibid.*). For example, the essentialist statement ‘all human beings are mortal. According to essentialism, “a member of a specific group may possess other characteristics that are neither needed to establish its membership nor preclude its membership, but that essences do not simply reflect ways of grouping objects; they also result in properties of the object” (Hirschfeld, *ibid.*)

³ The first woman priest in the Anglican Church of Rwanda was ordained in 1998. For 10 dioceses of the Anglican church of Rwanda nationwide, there are 11 ordained women out of 286 ordained men while the government call all the organisations, governmental and non-governmental to involve women in decision making, at least, at a rate of 30%.

However, some recommendations from Christian meetings and conferences give hope for the future of women in faith communities. Very recently, a conference whose theme was "In Partnership for Gender Justice: Towards Transformative Masculinities", was organized by the World Council of Churches (WCC) in Geneva and participants stated that "patriarchy has pervaded all spheres of life from culture to social organization, political and economic systems, institutions, theories and structures. This reality has resulted in the oppression of women and also large numbers of men in all spheres of life" WARC (World Alliance of Reformed Churches) Conference, 2008). Nevertheless, in spite of this positive gesture to call for a re-socialisation of men into "gender sensitive masculinities" and the call on churches to revisit theologies and reread their biblical texts in light of the current gender justice crisis, there is still a long way to go. For instance, to date, a Roman Catholic sister cannot administer the Holy Communion; they always assist a male priest just to distribute the bread and wine used in the process, and then playing the role of "Nyampinga" in the church.

The workshop was organised as part of the ongoing gender justice work of WARC and as part of WCC's preparation for the International Ecumenical Peace Convocation in 2011. The main purpose was to hold a dialogue between men and women in the context of the call for men to be partners and make solidarity with women in the fight against gender disparity, discrimination and violence. A report states that the workshop marks a change from an exclusive look at women's empowerment towards a discourse on partnership between women and men. The approach used by WCC highlighted the relevance of involving men's perspective in addressing issues of gender disparity that sometimes finds expression in violence against women, but the problem remains the implementation of the recommendations emanating from the workshop.

Patriarchy is also found in family traditions like women taking the name of their husbands and children always carrying the father's last name. Although these are few cases in Rwanda, especially in rural areas, there is an alternative/traditional non-patriarchal/non-patrilineal tradition in Rwanda. Indeed, Rwandan women and children are not committed to take the name of the husband or parent (respectively), because one may take a name of a parent who was not good and this may affect the future of the children as some people may view the children in the light of their parent's behavior. However, a father could give his father's name to his children, if he was someone with a good testimony to remember. When Christianity

arrived in Rwanda in 1900, churches introduced the system of women taking their husband's surnames to the detriment of their own surnames, and in the same way, the children taking the surnames of their fathers.

The arrival of missionaries brought both culture and Gospel. This is now accepted as 'normal' but it had the effect of negating women's rights in marriage. Before 1900 (when the missionaries arrived in Rwanda), there was a traditional wedding among Rwandans and women could keep their names. With the Christian marriage, there was acculturation and Rwandans adopted the style of the Western Christians by taking the surname of their husband, and sometimes losing their own. However, some women are at present resisting this practice and are choosing to keep their maiden name or hyphenate it with their married name so they can retain their own identity. Another case which is found in Rwanda is that during marriage, in most cases, women lose their religion to join the husband's church; for a man to join his wife's church is considered strange in the context of the Rwandan society. That is why, although there is some cause for optimism that churches will change and help their patriarchal followers to change, this will be a slow process.

2.1.2.4 Feminist theory

Feminism is essentially two things. It is a theoretical paradigm in social theory that "seeks to advocate and enhance women's emancipation in a predominantly patriarchal world" and "a movement that mobilises for women's emancipation and equality with regards to gender" (White, 1990: 75). Antrobus (2004) argues that feminism is broadly defined as "the struggle for the liberation of women, and encompasses epistemologies, methodologies, theories, and modes of activism that seek to bring an end to the oppression and subordination of women by men" (Antrobus, 2004: 18). Thus, a feminist refers to as an individual person espousing feminism, and feminist movements are collective mobilisations of women against the oppression of women. Additionally, the African Diaspora Feminists (2008) argue that "feminist movements are defined by their relatively radical gender politics and located as a subgroup within the broader category of women's movements" (Africa and African Diaspora Feminism, September 2008:<http://science.jrank.org/pages/7698/Africa-African-Diaspora-Feminism.html>)

Despite the fact that there is some misinterpretation and misconception of feminism, which is sometimes viewed as a rebellion against male domination, Maguire (1984) mentions that feminism does not just deal with issues of justice and equality but also “offers a critique of male-dominated institutions, values and social practices that are oppressive and destructive” (Maguire, 1984:71). She further makes it clear that “feminism is not an assault on men per se but an attack on systems which require injustice and on the patriarchal images of women as passive, dependent and inferior” (Maguire, 1984: 2). Additionally, Harding (1987) explains that this point confronts some of the contradictions and tensions that arise from women’s lives, and also emerges from the concepts and theories that feminists use in an attempt to express and comprehend these conflicts (Harding, (ed). 1987: 38). Nevertheless, even though feminists share the same ideas in terms of what gender oppression might mean, they differ widely in analysing its origin and what constitutes women’s liberation.

i. Liberal feminism

Liberal feminism has a long history stretching as far back as the 18th century. In the 18th century, liberal feminists such as Mary Wollestonecraft questioned women’s dependency on men, their capabilities and capacities and their rights. Liberal feminists demanded equal opportunities and equal participation in the management of their societies, and sought women’s liberation through legal reform and through increase of their participation in the political organs. Furthermore, they fought for greater participation of women in education and training (Maguire, 1984: 72).

There are three problems that liberal feminism has been facing. Firstly, while commending the idea of participation, no one can ignore that having political representation (liberal feminist idea) is not sufficient to empower women at grassroots level to change their socio-economic position. For instance, Rwanda has 54% representation of women in the lower house of parliament (the highest in the world) and South Africa has 35% representation of women in parliament. However, it does not follow that these two countries are models of gender equality – one only has to look at the statistics of gender-based violence, as outlined above. Secondly, even though liberal feminism has a long tradition of fighting for the rights and opportunities of women, it does not question the structural inequities prevailing in society. The theory does not pinpoint relations between the sexes and specific power relations. Thus, liberal feminism does not adequately challenge non-feminist views of the

inequalities between women and men. In other words, its reformist approach to changing gender inequities tends to perpetuate the status quo.

Thirdly, having “blended well with the modernisation paradigm” (Maguire, 1984: 73), liberal feminism ignored the impact of that paradigm on women. The modernisation paradigm has a narrow and static perception of the development process. Underdevelopment and poverty are considered as a stage in the development process which resulted from the absence of the necessary political, social and economic conditions for development to occur. Therefore, Nussbaum (2000) argues that the oppression of women within the modernisation paradigm is considered as having resulted from the backwardness and primitiveness of African cultures and social values. Additionally, Nussbaum mentions that modernisation of the economy was considered as a necessary prerequisite for the liberation of women because it was supposed to lead to the introduction of new values and social norms and ideals in favour of women’s liberation.

A critique of the modernisation paradigm in the 1970s pointed to the fact that modernisation, and indeed the welfare approaches to women’s issues, increased the marginalisation and the impoverishment of women (Meena, 1992: 86)

ii. Marxist feminism

Harcourt (1994) argues that Marxist feminists represent a wide variety of scholars who have attempted to apply dialectical materialism in analysing sources of gender oppression. He further shows that Marxist feminists locate women’s oppression in social class, race and ethnicity and that they challenge the attempt to isolate gender from social class; while Harcourt considers “capitalism, imperialism and sexism as inseparable” (Harcourt, 1994: 17). According to Marxist feminists, the liberation of women is linked to liberation from oppressive social class relations.

A number of scholars required explanations for women’s development issues in Marxism, which had initiated the most systematic critique of the modernization theory of the liberal feminists. Nevertheless, this approach put little focus on women and could not question the relevance of modernization. Marxist scholars supported Friedrich Engels’ argument that the subordination of women is a negative outcome of the development of private property and capitalism. In view of this, gender inequities can be changed after the demise of the capitalist system and a successful class struggle. Nevertheless, the main problem was that Marxist

thinkers have put their efforts into fighting capitalism, and forget to place emphasis on attacking patriarchy, which they view as simply a product of the capitalist system (Harcourt, 1994: 47).

A similar philosophy from development thinkers drew on the Marxist critics of Western capitalism to explain the root cause of the Third World poverty. Mainly inspired by Latin America and Caribbean understanding, but inspiring thinkers from other places, the dependency theorists criticised modernisation, with the argument that it was the root cause of Third World underdevelopment and did not do anything to solve Third World problems. Hence, dependency theorists called for separation from the former colonial countries and opted for Third World self-reliance (Rugumamu, 1997: 256).

iii.Radical feminism

Radical feminism came as a response to divergences between Marxist feminists who were frustrated due to the failure to apply social class in discussing and analysing gender oppression. For radical feminists women's oppression is located in the social institution of gender. From this understanding, radical feminists challenged male-dominated society, and viewed men as their 'enemy'. They envisaged a radical shift of oppressive gender relations. A further radical focus between radical feminists has been addressing the 'equal opportunity approach' that undermines structural gender inequities and envisages a radical shift of gender relations through the equity approach, which criticises contemporary social injustices and the discriminatory legal system (Moghadam, 1999, 367-388). The demand for women's empowerment might explain why radical feminism has met hostility in many societies and has failed to have a significant impact on development strategies in many places, including Southern Africa.

Radical feminists have been demanding education for empowerment. Research undertaken in Botswana and Tanzania has indicated that educational stereotyping is fuelling the marginalisation of women (Duncan, 1989: 137). While demanding equal opportunities, radical feminists have gone further to demand changes in the curriculum. In Botswana for instance, Duncan informs that radical feminists have studied and identified gender stereotyping in the curriculum in such subjects as sciences, social studies, English, Setswana and religion (Duncan, 1989: 139). Similarly in Rwanda, some pictures in school textbooks reinforce gender stereotyping; and some books used in schools talk about male heroes while

most women are portrayed as helpless individuals who can be easily manipulated, who can cry like children, whose address is at home and whose office is in the kitchen. Indeed, Maguire (1984) argues that “these gender biases are perpetuated because of male dominance in the media such radio, television and newspapers, the school curriculum, and the production of text books, journals and curriculum materials” (Maguire, 1984: 65).

Radical feminists emphasize the right of women to control of their own bodies and their health. This is seldom reflected in laws governing abortion in African countries (Maguire, 1984: 78). Batliwala (1993) mentions that radical feminists address the practical and strategic needs of women. Practical gender needs refers to assisting women to meet their basic welfare needs, such as the need for food, shelter, health and water. Strategic needs refer to empowering women to take control over their own needs through providing them with the space and flexibility to make decisions on issues affecting them and society (Batliwala, 1993:127-138). Indeed, there is a need to empower women to participate in micro and macro level policy formulation with regard to issues connected to gender and development. They also need to be empowered to facilitate their participation in the management of their society. Radical feminists are convinced that the way to address patriarchy and oppression in its different aspects consists in attacking the root causes of these problems and addressing the basic components of society that promotes them (Willis, 1984: 117-150).

vi.African feminism

African feminism refers to “political, cultural, and economic movements aimed at establishing greater rights and legal protections for women and campaigns for women's rights and interests” (Nussbaum, 2000: 241-25) in an African context. African women have, over the years, aspired to impose their own identities while, at the same time, doing all they can to change societal, cultural or traditional notions or perceptions of their gender. Furthermore,

“As women go through decades of societal crises as victims of maternal and infant mortality, continuing commitment to hard work in the area of agriculture, confinement to the private space and exclusion from modernity, African women have committed themselves, through unwavering revolutionary movements, to correct or reverse these disparities and forge new social relations” (African Feminism (December 30, 2009): <http://www.liberianobserver.com/node/3711>).

One of the strategies to reach their objectives was to use the media. As a positive outcome, in some countries women can claim land and inheritance rights and associational independence

in court, which was not experienced in the past. Women can now criticise laws and constitutions that ignore gender equality. Tripp (2003) highlights that they are increasingly “moving into government, legislative, party, NGO, and other leadership positions previously the nearly exclusive domain of men. In these and other ways women have taken advantage of the new political openings that occurred in the 1990s, even if the openings were limited and precarious” (Tripp, 2003: http://www.tanzaniagateway.org/docs/Women_in_movement.pdf). This second generation of activism is visibly not the same as the earlier post-independence generation of women’s concerns. The reasons for these changes are different- varying from the rise of multi-partyism and the termination of military rule to the rising influence of the international women’s movement and the donors strategies that shifted; the development of the use of ICT in the late 1990s; coupled with a major raise in secondary and university educated women (Tripp, 2003: *ibid.*).

However, this shift did not only bring about positive results. It created two factions within African feminism. Koran et al (1993) explain that, as it stands, “there are two separate forms of African feminism, namely intellectual feminism and popular feminism” (Korany et al, 1993: 267). The differences between these strands of feminism manifest in clear tensions. Nnemeka (2005) indicates that “intellectual feminism is usually promoted by urban and educated African women” and these intellectual feminists have often acquired their knowledge from abroad (Nnemeka, 2005: 57). As a result, they have a tendency to import the debate on women’s rights from outside Africa due to their access to the ‘easy option’ of ideological borrowing (Ibid. p.58). Tawanda (2005) shows that “the result of this is that African intellectual feminism seems to condemn aspects of African culture such as polygamy, excision and forced or early marriages, an attitude that echoes the paternalistic attitude and tone of Western women towards African women” (Tawanda, 2005: <http://www.ngopulse.org/article/african-feminism-driven-african-women>).

On the other side, popular feminism is different from the African intellectual feminism, the former having its roots in the culture and daily life experience of African women. Thus, popular feminism put all the African women in the same category, even though some of them are not necessarily educated. These women’s philosophy lay in the relevance of women in traditional African society in the production of food and put emphasis on their role in the liberation movements against colonialism. Hence, popular feminism rallies for gender equality referring to women’s historically relevant and influential role played in the

production of food and the day to day running of pre-colonial society (Tawanda, 2005: *ibid.* ; Snyder & Tadesse, 1995: 76)

Apart from these internal factors, African feminism suffered from two external factors: struggles for recognition from both men and from fellow Western women. Firstly, African feminism and feminism in Africa remains highly contested by some men who “have rejected the words outright, considering it as “un-African” and derogating “feminists” as sexually unattractive and humorless man-haters, troublemakers, Westernized, and sexually disreputable women who pose a threat to traditional culture and society” Snyder & Tadesse, *Ibid.* p.79). The Rwandan proverb “uruvuze umugore ruvuga umuhoro” shows how fatal it was to a girl to try to make public claims or protests. In Kinyarwanda term, these women were called “inkunguzi”. “Inkunguzi” is a name from the verb “gukungura”, meaning to bring or call the evil upon the society. However, Collins, (1990) shows that other men in Africa displayed different degrees of acceptance and tolerance, generally around the emancipation and enfranchisement of women, and helping the involvement of women in hitherto male-dominated institutions and development (Collins et al, 1990: 37-48 & Africa and African Diaspora Feminism, September 2008: *ibid.*)

Secondarily, Okome notes that in most feminist literature, African women are stereotyped by Western feminists as confused, powerless and not capable of initiating both the changes in their lives and the means to build these changes. From this ideology, Okome notes that Western feminists mostly react as superiors who are concerned to be helping and enlightening African women (Okome, 1999: 11-14).). However, while Okome’s view cannot be generalised to all Western women, it is a reality that this behavior can be seen among some Western women feminists (like among Western men) working in the non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and in the academic and political arenas. In other words, “Western feminists have dominated the discourse on feminism and women’s agenda, at the expense of African women” (Tawanda Sachikonye, 2005: *ibid.*). In addition to this, Nnaemeka (2005) highlights that:

“the arrogance that declares African women ‘problems’ objectifies us and undercuts the agency necessary for forging true global sisterhood. African women are not problems to be solved. Like women everywhere, African women have problems. More important, they have provided solutions to these problems. We are the only ones who can set our priorities and agenda. Anyone who wishes to participate in our struggles must do so in the context of our agenda” (Nnaemeka, 2005: 28)

When Johnson-Sirleaf (the first president woman in Africa) was asked the difference between African and Western feminisms, her argument was that the difference is that Westerners' feminism set a foundation in dealing with gender and development, but realistically, they did not manage to set up a strategy to achieve full women's emancipation and the full acquisition of leadership or display of leadership roles as African women were able to achieve. From the views of Johnson-Sirleaf, the difference between the African and Western feminism is at the level of achievement (Okome,199: 18)

Nevertheless, these two African feminist movements can unite, as long as there is due respect for these differences and a genuine effort to understand the other. African intellectual feminists must listen to the women they try to advise and talk about, because they do not experience the women's realities first-hand. Ultimately, solutions or any agenda must come from those within the specific context. These two feminisms should align under the united banner of African feminism, for they have much to learn from each other (Korany, Sterba, J& Tang, 1993: 145)

Amina Mama, former Director of the African Gender Institute, says that women's movements must remain united in the face of a "global grid of patriarchal power, and all the social, political and economic injustices that delivers to women" (Okome, ibid.p.23). This is most true in Africa, where women are adversely affected by the 'grid of patriarchal power.' Most importantly, these two feminisms are united in their basic cause: the ending of oppression against women in whatever manner. Thus, despite their differences, African intellectual feminism and popular feminism have the same basic goal.

However, despite a global call by feminist movements for the liberation of women, African society remains massively male-dominated, with a significant number of women not having real freedom. At the elite or higher level, some forms of social or political change are taking place. However, at the grassroots or bottom, the story is completely different. Most women continue to suffer suppression and injustices, making it difficult for them to change patriarchal relations from the grassroots level.

2.1.3 Development theory

Before we think about women's involvement in development as policymakers, development planners and women's organisations suggest, we need to first ask what development is about.

The term development has always been a subject of controversial debate. Within the criticisms of 'development', we need to seek development directions which are determined by women themselves. Bourque and Warren (1981) show that the notion of developing countries emerged as part of the work of early development economists in the 1950s, which theorised very simplistically about the stages of development that societies had to pass through to become "developed," or "modern" (Bourque and Warren, 1981: 37). Nevertheless, these concepts sought to encompass all countries, ignoring the vast differences among them, and to use the history of Western industrialized countries as a broad model for the process through which all societies were to pass.

What matters in this research is not the name given to development discourse and the global economic system as a whole, but rather the impact these discourses and systems have on the day-to-day lives of millions of people around the world, and the possible implications for the process of women's empowerment, whether in Rwanda or in the world as a whole. This involves an understanding of the inter-connectedness of development discourse with other discourses such as Women in Development (WID), Women and Development (WAD), Gender and Development (GAD) and women's empowerment.

Feminists define development in terms of improved human well-being rather than in terms of economic growth targets (World Bank, 2001a). They see development as a multifaceted process and tend to agree with the definition of Walter Rodney (1990) who states that development, at the level of the individual, "implies increased skill and capacity, greater freedom, creativity, self-discipline, responsibility, and material well-being" (Walter Rodney, 1990: 95). Some of these categories are obviously moral ones and mean different things to different people, depending on things like social class, ethnicity, and personal codes of ethics. Indisputably, the chances of achieving these characteristics of development are very much dependent upon the state of the society as a whole (Moser, 1989).

In ordinary usage, the concept development implies movement from one level to another, usually with some increase in size, number, or quality of some sort. In the Penguin English Dictionary, the verb develop means "to unfold, bring out latent powers of; expand; strengthen; spread; grow; evolve; become more mature; show by degrees; explain more fully; elaborate; exploit the potentialities (of a site) by building, mining, etc" (Penguin, 1977). In this research, these meanings of development are applied to human societies generally and women's empowerment specifically. The usage of the word development was popularised in

“the post-World War II period to describe the process through which countries and societies outside North America and Europe (many of them former colonial territories) were to be transformed into modern, developed nations from what their colonisers saw as backward, primitive, underdeveloped societies” (Parpart, Connelly & Barriteau, 2000: *ibid.*). By contrast, while African people were treated as ‘backward’ and ‘second-class world citizens’, African men in their turn treated (and are still treating) African women as inferior to men. Indeed, women suffered a double discrimination; being Africans treated as backward; and being women in an African patriarchal society.

The first attention to women’s issues in development was paid in the late 1960s. It was observed that women hardly had access to modern developments and that they threatened to fall victim to them rather than to get benefit from them. Researchers warned that this lagging behind of women would not only affect women but would eventually have effects on the entire economy and the society as a whole (The Netherlands Government, 1998: <http://www.euforic.org/iob/publ/reports/271e.pdf>). African women's fundamental contributions to their households, food production systems specifically and national economies generally have been increasingly acknowledged, within Africa and by the international community.

2.1.3.1 The classical meaning of development

In ancient Greece, development was viewed as an achieved state of a higher status. By using the term barbarous, Aristotle meant the Greeks had once been uncivilised and with lower status (Nederveen, 2001:18). Aristotle's view is close to that of Herbert Spencer who was convinced that human society, nature and the world (cosmos) were under a similar immutable law of progress. Needs are not same – there some fundamental needs like eating and drinking, a shelter, clothes and many other basic needs. Hence, all other aspects of human nature are subordinate to the priority given to these basic needs (Serugo Paulos, June 2004: <http://www.ub.uib.no/elpub/2004/h/532001/Hovedoppgave.pdf>). Vandana (1999) makes explicit his view that humans develop new needs to replace old: ‘the satisfaction of the first need (the action of satisfying, and the instrument of satisfaction which has been acquired) leads to new needs’ (Vandana, 1999: 26-34). However, quoting Maslow, Kendra (2005) argues that “Maslow emphasized the importance of self-actualization, which is a process of growing and developing as a person to achieve individual potential” (Kendra (2005):<http://www.psychology.about.com/od/theoriesofpersonality/a/hierarchyneeds.htm>)

Patterson (1999) in the book; *Change and Development in the 20th Century*, presents Spencer's view and elucidates the above views when he says that according to Spencer,

"human society had evolved slowly under contradictory circumstances. Each society attempted to achieve the highest degree of happiness, which brought them into conflict with other communities. However, this actually hindered the development of civilization. On the other hand, each society had a desire to diminish the misery of inferior creature-laborers, children and primitive societies, by ameliorating their conditions of existence...as a result, civilization could emerge only when sympathetic circumstances based on the amelioration of misery outweigh the earlier unsympathetic ones rooted in war of man against man" (Patterson 1999:21).

This highlights once again the meaning of development as a path to progress. It also presents development as involving the tension between the developed "civilized" in contrast to savages and primitive people who live close to nature, the "underdeveloped" who are "uncivilized" (de Gruchy, 2003: 20-39). Serugo (2004) indicates that "the classical conceptualisation of development had great bearing and influence on the later definitions, understanding and interpretation of development, especially from the 1950s when the major concern of development was intervention to ameliorate the misery of developing countries by correcting imbalances in economic growth" (Serugo Paulos, June 2004: 7: *ibid.*).

Much of the development thinking on economic progress in the 1950s and 1960s was summarised by the modernisation vision of Rostow's stages of economic growth. In assuming that all nations will pass through stages similar to those already experienced by the advanced industrial nations, Rostow's economic stage theory is synonymous with the sociological theory of modernisation. This impressive vision of a transition from subsistence to mass consumption and market economies "has evaporated, being punctured by the deteriorating conditions of living and worsening poverty of the masses of poor people in developing countries" (Shallal, Mussa. August 11, 2007: http://www.allacademic.com/meta/p175387_index.html). This is debatable. Proponents of modernization would argue that those societies closely tied to western capitalist economies have experienced huge increases in life expectancy, living standards etc. A fundamental challenge for the failure of the grand development project has been ascribed by some scholars

in development to the imposition of western culture and social construction of knowledge as well as the exclusion of gender from the western construction of rational economic behavior.

Modernization is the earliest development theory and the international community upheld modernization as the solution to Africa's 'underdevelopment' and the underdevelopment of the Third World. Some of the African writings corroborated the early development paradigm as unholistic and connected it to the conflict between tradition and modernity at the individual and communal level. Thus, early African writers thematised the problem of inevitable social change brought about by the colonial encounter and how it impacted individuals and communities. The Africans writers embody the way these new definitions and conceptualizations of development have had visible consequences on the individual's psyche and the communal ethos. In fact, de Gruchy (2003) argues that “development was - and continues to be for the most part - a top down, ethnocentric and technocratic approach, which treats people and cultures as abstract concepts, statistical figures to be moved up and down in the charts of “progress” (de Gruchy, 2003: 25). In other words, it comes as no surprise that development became a force so destructive to Third World cultures, ironically in the name of people’s interests. However, on the other side, the destruction of some aspects of African culture is a mark of progress towards international human rights norms.

According to Poostchi (1986), development is a set of conscious efforts directed toward economic, social and political change that takes place in a community or a society as it evolves from a traditional state (Poostchi, 1986: 93). The transformation to modern status includes social and political consciousness, division of labour, literacy, urbanization, and a broad general participation in the overall development activities at national, regional, local and village level. Poostchi (1986) defines the goals, objectives and the aims of development to be “not to develop things but to develop people”, and the implication of this approach is that “development must be aimed at spiritual, moral and material advancement of the whole human being, both as a member of the society and from the point of view of individual fulfillment” (Poostchi, 1986: 104).

2.1.3.2 Development as freedom

Development is something difficult to measure. While Amartya Sen, economist and Nobel Prize winner, defines development in terms of “freedom and unfreedoms of people” (Sen, 1999: 37), some other economists use GNP (Gross National Product) as an indicator of economic growth

and development. The development economics writings differentiate between three concepts: economic growth, development, and human development. In fact, when a researcher uses GNP per capita as a measure of development, he/she is actually talking about economic growth. However, development is more than economic growth and cannot be measured solely by GNP per capita. Some aspects of development are not included in the GNP measure. Indeed, development means, among other things, the building of democratic institutions, the initiation of a performing banking system, an environment where everyone is enjoying the rule of law as well as an independent judicial system, a free press, access to health care and education (Anspaugh, Dignan & Anspaugh, 2006: 176). None of these issues is captured in the GNP.

In addition, GNP does not consider or measure some economic activities or their impacts. Some of these activities are household labour, informal or black market activities, and the reduction of natural resources. The World Bank argues that GNP per capita does not, by itself, constitute or measure welfare or success in development. GNP does not make a difference between the objectives and eventual uses of a given produce nor does it say whether this produce merely offsets some natural or other challenges or contributes to welfare (World Bank, 2001b).

Even though poverty was always defined in terms of lack of income, what the capability perspective does in poverty analysis is to enhance the understanding of the nature and causes of poverty and deprivation by shifting primary attention away from means (and one particular means that is usually given exclusive attention, for example income), to ends that “people have reason to pursue, correspondingly, to the freedom to be able to satisfy these ends” (Sen 1999:90). Thus, women’s empowerment brings a shift in the perspective of the poverty and development debate, a development that moves from aggregate income to capabilities, or that moves way from income as a means to development to put more attention on enlarging women’s choices.

“Development has to be more concerned with enhancing the lives we lead and freedom we enjoy, expanding the freedoms that we have reason to value not only makes our lives richer and more unfettered, but also allows us to be fuller social persons, exercising our own volitions and interacting with –and influencing–the world in which we live.” (Sen, 1999: 14)

Use this as a starting point in your data analysis and then go on to describe how this has been changed through cooperatives). In the light of Sen’s vision of development, both the modernisation paradigm and the development discourse show the face of development as unfreedom, given the fact that these theories are top-down and thus, anti-dialogical. Sen (1999) argues that freedom is both the primary end, and the principal means of development.

He contends that “greater freedom enhances the ability of people to help themselves and also to influence the world, and these matters are central to the process of development” (Sen 1999:36). In light of this, he comes to the conclusion that “development is nothing other than the process of expanding human freedoms” (Sen, *ibid.* p.47). It is important to highlight here that, for Sen, freedom is not the opposite of oppression, but is rather opposed to unfreedom, a word he defines to include the full range of hindrances to human flourishing or capability deprivation.

Sen’s argument might be considered as counter to the traditional understanding of development whose assumption was that “economic growth and economic efficiency are not only necessary but also sufficient to bring about an improvement in the wellbeing of people” (Nayyar 2003a:62). In fact, this traditional way of measuring or evaluating development has been contested from time to time by many people who, instead, suggest other indicators of development such as reduction in poverty, inequality and unemployment that would indicate changes in the quality of life (Nayyar 2003a:62). Thus, in order to attain development, growth and efficiency need to be combined with other things such as freedom, poverty eradication, reduced inequality, human development and sustainable environment (*Ibid.* p.63). Additionally, Sen (1999) mentions that “poverty is a set of deprivations, and that capability provision is the core factor for development” (Sen, 1999: 70). He further argues that “freedom is the source of development, and freedom and unfreedom are rooted in human capabilities” (Sen, 1999: *Ibid.*). Indeed, people’s capacity and their access to social opportunities constitute their capability.

Therefore, poverty must be seen as deprivation of basic capabilities and rights rather than merely as lowness of income, which is the standard criterion of identification of poverty. According to Sen (1987), capabilities are intrinsic in people and help them to use their assets in one way or another, in order to increase their wellbeing.

“Human capabilities include good health, education, and production or other life-enhancing skills. Social capabilities include social belonging, leadership, relations of trust, a sense of identity, values that give meaning to life, and the capacity to organize. Political capability includes the capacity to represent oneself or others, access information, form associations, and participate in the political life of a community or country” (Sen, 1987: 65: <http://cefe.gtz.de/forum/empowerment.pdf>)

This is not to deny that lack of income also contributes to poverty. But since the power of income is limited by contingent experiences, capability is a better approach for dealing with poverty and should thus be a cornerstone in the process of women's empowerment. Sen discusses the positive role empowered women can play in development (1999):

“The result of women's participation is not merely to generate income for women, but also to provide the social benefits that come from women's enhanced status and independence...not merely to raise the deal women get, but also through the greater agency of women to bring about other major changes in society”(Sen, 1999: 87)

Hence, for societies in which “women and other vulnerable groups face obvious un-freedoms in these spheres, development means the removal of un-freedoms. An unfreedom must be removed in a sphere of life in a meaningful sense if freedom in it is to be expanded in it a positive sense. These un-freedoms can be expressed variously, for example as goals of freedom from hunger, or the freedom from the lack of basic human rights, or the freedom from avoidable illness and so on” (ILO- Economic and Labour Market Analysis Department: <http://www.ilo.org/public/english/employment/strat/publ/ep01-19.htm>). Initially developed by Sen (1987) as an ethical investigation into the issues of distribution and inequality, the theory of “development as freedom” has been developed and applied by him and others to the understanding of dimensions of well-being ranging from poverty, famine, gender and justice, to development itself (Sen, 1987: 27).

Bratton and Van de Walle (1997) support Sen's view with their theory of human development. They view that “human development rotates around developing human capacities through international social and economic policies and programs that enhance human capacity towards self-fulfillment” (Bratton and Van de Walle, 1997). In addition, they argue that:

“The concept of development, in this context, is linked to development of human beings as an end and a means. In this way, human beings can fulfil their material, moral and social needs” (Bratton and Van de Walle, 1997:47)

2.1.4 Feminism and Development: Theoretical Perspectives

Perspectives on women's participation in development have generally fallen into one of three different approaches which will be outlined below.

2.1.4.1 Women In Development (WID)

The WID approach is located within the liberal framework. According to Meena (1992), development within the liberal framework is seen in terms of increasing efficiency of producing goods and services in a competitive market economy. Women are therefore important as a factor of production. Women, it was being argued, who constituted a majority of agricultural producers, had not been part of the mainstream development plans, a factor which was attributed to the agrarian crisis of the 1970s – “to maximize efficiency in utilising factors of production in the development process, women had to be incorporated” (Meena, 1992: 20)

As a result of various women’s pressure groups from the North, the United Nations declared the 1970s the ‘women’s decade’. The General Assembly urged governments to pursue policies which assured the incorporation of women in the planning process. This provided the context within which the Women In Development ideology (WID) was to be conceived. The 1970s witnessed the proliferation of literature which focused on women’s situations in the society (Meena, *ibid.*)

The attempt to add women into the development strategies did not provide a point of departure from the welfare approaches of the earlier decade. Rather, it led to an increase of “donor-funded” income-generating activities for women, but these activities were not part of the mainstream plans. Most of these projects were conceived by donor agencies in collaboration with national governments. Indeed, “women who were supposed to be the “target” of these projects were marginal actors in conceiving, monitoring and evaluating such projects” (Meena, 1992: 20-21).

However, the main challenge for integrating women in development is the lack of sufficient gender-aggregated data which would facilitate gender-responsive planning. Apart from lack of documented statistics regarding the situation of women, mainstreaming women in development was criticized by different scholars in the field of development. For instance, Bourque and Warren (1981) mention that: “(i) mainstreaming women into development does not question the nature of the development itself, which may be contrary to women’s interests and concerns; and (ii) taking account of and supporting women’s actual roles in production does not challenge the often inequitable basis by which these roles are allocated within society” (Bourque and Warren, 1981: 86).

These critical views have led to a new strategic focus on women's empowerment within the development process. This focus highlights measures that empower women to give their contribution to initiating the development agenda, and challenge socioeconomic systems that subordinates them to men. The assessment of past failures also led to the conclusion that the development process itself needs engendering. It is in this context that GAD (Gender and Development) was implemented as will be seen below. Another challenge highlighted by many observers is that WID focused mainly on women, and left men behind. WID theory forgot that men are part of the story of gender relations. In fact, if men have been key persons in gender inequality, they need to be mobilised to be part of the solution of gender equality. Moreover, WID tended to generalise about all "African women", or all "rural" or "peasant" women. This is not objective, given the fact that all women in urban or rural areas do not have the same challenges and the same enabling environment towards their empowerment and emancipation.

Additionally, if one looks at all the literature on WID, women are viewed as being victims whose consciousness needed raising by middle-class intellectual women (both local and foreign), rather than as potential allies in coalitions built by different groups of women at the local, national and global level (Meena, 1992: 49). The reality is that people or organisations claiming to be experts in gender and development tended to assume they knew best what strategies and objectives the poor rural women should adopt, and were rarely prepared to listen, observe, serve and learn. As shown by White (1996), the biggest problem with WID has been its focus on a unitary concept called "women", which is somehow misleading, given the fact that it ignores the instability of gender relations, the impact of other key social relations, and the differentiation among women. Realistically, the relationship between development and participation is rather more fraught with tensions and contradictions than these commonalities might suggest (White, 1996: 6-15).

The most criticized aspect of WID is that it has ignored the dynamics of differential power and privilege between men and women. Actually, WID treats women as if they live in a uni-sex vacuum. Nevertheless, to raise women's status surely has implications for men. In view of this, affecting women's power and privilege has implications for men's; and while exploitative economic relations go unaddressed, the patriarchal oppression of women goes unnamed.

As White (1996) notes, for both participation and gender “What began as a political issue is translated into a technical problem which the development enterprise can accommodate with barely a falter in its stride” (White, 1996: 73-97). Just as efficiency arguments were used to make a case for increasing women’s access to development institutions, so participatory development gained currency through arguments about the cost-effectiveness of engaging “primary stakeholders” in development projects. In addition, “just as mainstreaming gender led to dilution of its political dimension, so too has the rapid spread of participatory approaches led to their use by powerful international institutions to lend their prescriptions authenticity and legitimacy, submerging the more radical dimensions of participatory practice” (Moser, 1993:35).

2.1.4.2 Gender and Development (GAD)

The central point of the original women-and-development approach was that both women and men must be lifted from poverty and both women and men must contribute to and benefit from development efforts.

The shift from a WID to a GAD approach was initiated by many of the bilateral aid agencies, especially Western countries who were at the forefront in adopting and putting in place GAD policies to encourage gender equity (Moser, 1993: 65). In other terms, mainstreaming is the heart of most bilateral aid GAD policies, with an emphasis on the promotion of gender equity through development support. Gender analysis is considered as mandatory for all projects, and focus is put on integrating gender concerns into their overall development agenda (UNDP: <http://hdrc.undp.org.in/GndrInitv/wrksprpts/gender%20policy%20of%20adb.pdf>)

Harcourt (1994) argues that the World Bank in 1994 revised its earlier WID policy that tended to treat women as a special target group of beneficiaries in projects and programs, and replaced it with a new GAD policy (Harcourt, 1994: 92). The revised framework is broader, reflecting the ways in which the relations between men and women constrain or advance efforts to boost economic growth and reduce poverty. In fact, the World Bank’s GAD policy is based on the recognition that “investing in women is central to sustainable development” and refers to its own studies indicating strong economic arguments for investing in women (World Bank, 2001a: 78)

While the WID approach emphasized exclusively on women to improve women's unequal position, the GAD approach acknowledges that the improvement of the women's status involve analyzing the relationship between men and women, as well as the consensus and cooperation of men. Therefore, focus is put on the necessity to understand the ways in which the unbalanced relationship between women and men may fuel exclusion that women face in the development process. There is also an evident acknowledgment that the participation and obligation of men is needed to essentially adjust the social and economic position of women. This recognition led to a transformation from an exclusive emphasis on women to a GAD approach that also factors into the equation males and the extended socio-cultural environment (Asian Development Bank (2010), Policy on Gender and Development : <http://adb.org/Documents/Policies/Gender/gender0401.asp?p=gender>, see also Meena, 1992: 48).

Furthermore, inherent in the GAD approach is gender mainstreaming, which is a means of addressing women's concerns more holistically and effectively. It requires gender planning to be applied to all development operations and projects, and allows women to be factored into economic and development policy. The GAD approach utilizes gender analysis, which is according to Hill and King (1995), "the tool for analyzing the specific nature of gender differences by asking basic questions such as who does what, where, when, how often, with what resources and returns, and who controls what" (Hill and King ,1995: 139). These questions help to evaluate gender differentiations in activities, and in the ownership and control of resources. The Asian Development Bank (June 2003) highlights that, "on the basis of the information obtained through gender analysis, appropriate policy, project interventions, strategies, and mechanisms can be designed to assist in improving women's inclusion, status, and productivity" (Asian Development Bank (June 2003). "Gender and Development": <http://www.adb.org/Documents/Policies/Gender/gender-policy.pdf>)

However, in the context of Rwanda (as in many other African countries), the GAD approach does not signify that individual women's projects or projects with special targets on women are to be discarded on the whole. Indeed, until there are no structural limitations or barriers confining women's involvement, projects oriented exclusively at women or projects with special components addressed at women are still needed, mainly in contexts wherein cultural dictates require segregation of the sexes, or in circumstances where women have need of special help to enable their full involvement in mainstream projects. Gender mainstreaming

thus does not entail that women no longer call for special attention in projects since their benefits are mainstreamed and all project inputs have equally access to men as to women.

2.1.4.3 Women and Development (WAD)

According to Snyder and Tadesse (1995), “Women and Development” is a wide-ranging term used to mean a perception and a movement whose main goal is the welfare of society – a community made of women, men and children. Hence, development in conformity with the International Development Strategy for the Second Development Decade, signifies to bring about sustainable welfare of the individual and to grant benefits to all the members of the community (Parpart, Connelly and Barribeau, 2000: *ibid.* & Snyder and Tadesse, 1995: 6). As women constitute more than half of the human resources and are key actors in the economic and social well-being of societies, development objectives cannot be fully achieved without their involvement. In other words, women and development is a holistic theory in which the dream or goal of one person cannot be achieved without the accomplishment of the other. For this to happen, women are supposed to have both the legal right and access to existing means for the upgrading of oneself and of society (Snyder and Tadesse, *ibid.* p.7)

Meena shows that by the mid-1970s, a critique of the WID approach within the modernisation paradigm attempted to add the social justice rationale to the economic rationale of incorporating women in development programmes. In fact, it was being argued that women were already fully integrated into the capitalist system, and that their subordinate position had to be understood within the context of how they related to the development process. Thus, the WID approach gave way to the Women And Development (WAD) approach. In practical terms, WAD concentrated on women’s practical rather than strategic needs. That is, the WAD approach focused on practical needs such a material services, health and education and less attention was given to those aspects which had contributed to structural gender inequities such as unequal sexual division of labour, legal discrimination and sexual abuse. Neither WAD nor WID considered in practical terms, issues of empowering women (Meena, 1992: 21)

This philosophy had an influence on the opinions of some academics and activists (primarily in NGOs) during the 1970s, who suggested that women’s projects be completely detached from men’s. Their argument was that integrating women into a patriarchal world would be

dangerous and opted instead to create initiate projects exclusively constituted by women, constructed with the aim of protecting the interests of women from patriarchal domination.

Moreover, the WAD approach persistently called to development planners, policy-makers and donor organisations to recognize that women are the cornerstone of agricultural production in many Africa countries, although their input has been systematically disregarded and marginalized. For people working within this paradigm, a campaign was organised to change policies and put women's concerns on national and international agendas. In addition, "efforts to organize have been oriented both to making mainstream bureaucracies more responsive to women's needs and to strengthening bonds among women through active, autonomous local groups and networks" (The international Development Research Center, 1995: <http://www.crdi.ca/books/focus/910/04-chp03.html>). However, Parpart, Connelly and Barriteau (2000) indicate that:

"Although the WAD perspective has offered an important corrective to WID's too-ready assumption that male-dominated states can be used to alter gender inequities, it also has its weaknesses. As noted above, marginalization and smallness of scale have limited the transformative potential of women-only organizations, although gains have been made in raising consciousness, publicizing women's concerns, and bringing them into the policy arena. The WAD approach is also inclined to see women as a class, downplaying differences among women, particularly along racial and ethnic lines, and at times assuming that solutions to problems affecting the world's women can be found in the experiences and agendas of one particular group"(Parpart, Connelly and Barriteau (2000): *ibid.*)

In view of the above discussions, the International Labour Organization/ILO (2000) provides a general comparative view of these three approaches: WID, WAD and GAD:

Table 2: A comparative view of WID, WAD and GAD

	WID	WAD	GAD
Origin	-Emerged in the early 1970s	-Emerged in the second half of the 1970s	-Emerged in the 1980s as an alternative to WID. Its theoretical focus is based on socialist feminists which identify the social construction of production and reproduction as the basis of women's oppression.
Analysis and proposed solution to women's condition	-Was first articulated by American liberal feminists who advocated legal and administrative reforms that would better integrate women into the economic system - Closely linked with the modernisation paradigm which was the popular program in that time. - Women were excluded from	-Found its theoretical roots in Neo-Marxist feminism and draws its theoretical based in dependency theory -Evolves as a reaction to the limitation of modernisation theory and WID's claim of women's exclusion from development - Postulated that women have always	- Roots gender issues to patriarchy. The Problem of women's oppression is rooted in the unequal relations in power (between rich and poor, women

	<p>the development process</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Women should then be integrated into ongoing development initiatives 	<p>been part of the development process</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Concept of WID was linked to the maintenance of economic dependence of 3rd world countries on industrialised countries. - Assume that women's position will improve if and when the international structures will be equitable 	<p>and men) which prevent equitable relations and the full participation of women in development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Focus on the relation between men and women -Its analysis primarily center on the perception of roles and attributes of women as inferior and subordinate to men
Strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Introduction of women's income generating projects; thereby increasing women's productivity and income - Increase women's ability to be better mothers and homemakers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Carefully planned development strategies that tend to concentrate on income-generating projects 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Address practical needs identified by women and men to improve their conditions -Address strategic needs of women and the poor through people-centred development
Weaknesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Doesn't question the nature and the sources of women's subordination and oppression -Focuses instead on advocacy for equal participation of women in employment and education - Focuses on gender as unity of analysis, not taking into account the impact of class, culture and race - Focuses on the productive sector not considering its effect on the reproductive aspect of women's work and life. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Falls to undertake the analysis of the relationship of patriarchy, differing modes of production and women's subordination and oppression. Solution of the underrepresentation of women in the economic, political and social spheres is seen to be through carefully planned intervention strategies rather than fundamental shift in the social relations of gender Similar to WID, it solely focuses on the productive sector at the expense of reproductive side of women's work and lives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Very demanding in terms of commitment, capacity and resources: -Demands a degree of commitment to structural changes and power shifts. Difficult to do because it goes beyond simply integrating women into ongoing development initiatives -Leads inevitably to a fundamental re-examination of structures and institutions, and ultimately the base of power of the entrenched elites.

Source: International Labour Organization (Bureau for Gender Equality), 2000: 6

2.1.5 Reflections on women's empowerment

Given the fact that all of the theories above were conceived in a top-down system of development, the empowerment approach challenged these theories by adopting a holistic and effective strategy for women's emancipation and development. This approach entails that women are given power to influence social choices and decisions affecting the whole society (not just areas of a society accepted as women's place), and being recognized and respected as equal citizens and human beings with a contribution to make.

2.1.5.1 Definition of empowerment

In addition to the definition given in chapter one, Singh and Titi (eds) (1995) mention that “empowerment is the ability for a person female or male to interpret her or his situation and make informed choices and decisions affecting individuals, families and the community as a whole”(Singh and Titi (eds), 1995:75). Speer and Hughey (1995) define empowerment in these terms : “empowerment is the expansion of assets and capabilities of poor people to participate in, negotiate with, influence, control, and hold accountable institutions that affect their lives” (Speer and Hughey, 1995: 729-748). The core of the meaning of women’s empowerment lies in the ability of a woman to control her own destiny. Kabeer (2001), whose definition is the most widely accepted, defines empowerment as “the expansion of people’s ability to make strategic life choices in a context where this ability was previously denied to them” (Kabeer, 2001: 86). Almost all definitions of women’s empowerment include some reference to an expansion of choice and freedom to make decisions and take the actions necessary to shape life-outcomes. At the core of these definitions are two components of empowerment: resources and agency (Malhotra and Mather, 1997: *ibid.*)

According to the framework developed by the Task Force on Education and Gender Equality of the United Nations Millennium Project, resources can be seen as including capabilities (including health, nutrition, and education); access to opportunities (including access to economic assets , resources and political opportunity); and security (safety from violence and conflict). In the Task Force’s conceptualization, the term gender equality reflected equality in access between women and men to each of these sets of resources. Such equality, however, is necessary but not sufficient to achieve empowerment. It creates the enabling context for an empowerment process, but does not guarantee empowerment (Kishor, 2000a: 15).

In view of the above, governments and international donor agencies must bear the responsibility of promoting policies and programs that strengthen gender equality and give women greater access to resources. It is also important to understand that empowerment is a multidimensional concept. A number of studies have shown that women who are empowered in one area of life may not be empowered in others (Malhotra and Mather 1997: 77). For example, women who are empowered in the family may not exhibit the same in the political sphere. It is similarly true that women’s empowerment and its impact are context-specific. For example, a woman’s ability to make decisions regarding her child’s health may be very

significant in terms of outcomes for herself and her child in a country in which the public health system is weak and difficult to access, but the same may not be true in a setting in which that system is well-functioning and requires very little mediation to access (Hashemi et al. 1996: 218). By deduction, the meaning of empowerment refers “broadly to the expansion of freedom of choice and action to shape one’s life and implies control over resources and decisions” (Narayan, 2002: 37).

For poor people, Narayan (2002) in the World Bank Report argues that “freedom is severely curtailed by their voicelessness and powerlessness in relation particularly to the state and markets” (Narayan, 2002). There are important gender inequalities, including within the household. Since powerlessness is embedded in a culture of unequal institutional relations, Narayan (2002) adopts an institutional definition of empowerment in the context of poverty reduction, which also helps draw out the relevance of the World Bank’s work - “Empowerment is the expansion of assets and capabilities of poor people to participate in, negotiate with, influence, control, and hold accountable institutions that affect their lives” (Narayan, 2002).

In view of the above, one can deduce that women’s empowerment involves the removal of formal and informal institutional barriers that prevent women from taking action to improve their wellbeing (individually or collectively) and which limit their choices. Narayan (2002) makes it clear that “the key formal institutions include the laws, rules, and regulations upheld by the states, markets, civil society, and international agencies; informal institutions include norms of social solidarity, sharing, social exclusion, and corruption, among others” (Narayan, 2002: xix). In the same way, Kabeer (2001) indicates that women’s empowerment refers to the process where women are able to interpret their own situation (social, economic and political) and “to identify the desired changes that they would like to make and go ahead and make those changes in their lives, family and community and positively benefit from those changes” (Kabeer, 2001: 83). That is, being able to take control of their social, economic and political destiny.

The term ‘empowerment’ is a very widely used term, particularly in the context of women and the poor, but is often misused and poorly defined. It is not always clear whether those who use terms such as women’s empowerment, gender equality, female autonomy or

women's status are referring to the same or different concepts. Malhotra and Mather (1997), in a recent paper on the concept of empowerment, clarify that women's empowerment is distinct from the empowerment of other disadvantaged or socially excluded groups because, first, women are not just one among several disempowered sub-populations; "instead they are a cross-cutting category of individuals that overlaps each of these other groups" (Malhotra and Mather, 1997: 75). Second, women's disempowerment is caused and reinforced through household and family relations much more so than is true for the disempowerment of other socially disadvantaged groups. As Malhotra and Schuler point out, "this makes it particularly important to examine the household-level implications of any efforts to empower women" (ibid.). Third, while empowerment of all disadvantaged groups requires a transformation of the power relations and hierarchies embedded in social institutions, "empowering women requires, in particular, a focused transformation of all norms and institutions that support patriarchal structures" (Malhotra and Mather, *ibid.* p.85)

In other words, empowerment is a process that fosters power (that is, the capacity to implement) in people, for use in their own lives, their communities, and in their society, by acting on issues that they define as important. The term can also be used to characterize relations within households or between poor people and other actors at the global level. However, there are important gender differences in the causes, forms, and consequences of empowerment or disempowerment. Hence, there are obviously many possible definitions of empowerment, including rights-based definitions. Drawing on these elements, "it then diagrams a conceptual framework that focuses on institutional reform to invest in poor people's assets and capabilities, leading to improved development outcomes" (Speer and Hughey, 1995: 735).

On the other side, a true empowerment and development have foundation in people's freedom of choice. Indeed, as people exercise real choice, they gain increased control over their lives. Poor people's choices are extremely limited, both by their lack of assets and by their powerlessness to negotiate better terms for themselves with a range of institutions, both formal and informal. Hence, Narayan (2002) suggests that, "since powerlessness is embedded in the nature of institutional relations, in the context of poverty reduction an institutional definition of empowerment is appropriate" (Narayan, 2002: 9).

However, we suggest that three components of the definition are basic to any understanding of empowerment. Empowerment is multi-dimensional, social, and a process. First, it is multi-dimensional in that it occurs within sociological, psychological, economic, and other dimensions. Second, empowerment is social in that it occurs at various levels, such as individual, group, and community. In fact, it is a social process, since it occurs in relationship to others. Third, empowerment is a process that is similar to a path or journey, one that develops as we work through it. Other aspects of empowerment may vary according to the specific context and people involved, but these remain constant. In addition, one important implication of this definition of empowerment is that the individual and community are fundamentally connected. The idea of empowerment advanced by Mullen (1999) is that “those who have little or no influence, such as excluded people, are able to acquire the capacity to have informed opinions, to take initiatives, make independent choices and influence change” (Mullen, 1999: 86-87). It also means that those with influence actively change their attitudes and rules and change the way decisions are made through engaging with excluded people.

According to UNIFEM (2007), empowerment can be viewed at two levels: individual and community level. At the individual level the relevant issues are: patron-client relationships; gender dimensions; access to state, market and common property resources. At the community level the principal issues are: the institutional framework, resource mobilization and linkages with other administrative levels of the country (UNIFEM, 2007: 197)

Moreover, the World Bank has identified empowerment as one of the key constituent elements of poverty reduction, and as a primary development assistance goal. The Bank has also made gender mainstreaming a priority in development assistance, and is in the process of implementing an ambitious strategy to this effect. The World Bank (1994 b) highlights that “the promotion of women’s empowerment as a development goal is based on a dual argument: that social justice is an important aspect of human welfare and is intrinsically worth pursuing, and that women’s empowerment is a means to other ends” (World Bank, 1994b). A recent policy research report by the World Bank (2001a), for example, identifies gender equality both as a development objective in itself, and as a means to promote growth, reduce poverty, and promote better governance. A similar dual rationale for supporting women’s empowerment has been articulated in the policy statements put forth at several high-level international conferences in the past decade (e.g. the Beijing Platform for Action,

the Beijing+5 declaration and resolution, the Cairo Programme of Action, the Millennium Declaration, and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) (World Bank. 2001a)

2.1.5.2 Agency as a component of Empowerment

Agency is the defining characteristic of empowerment. It refers to the ability to make strategic choices; to not just have access to resources but to be able to control them and make decisions that affect important life outcomes (Malhotra and Mather, 1997). Generating agency requires a process that stimulates participation and inclusion and recognizes women as agents of change in their own lives. As a result, any discussion of empowerment emphasizes the *process* of engaging people more than the *content* of what is done with them. Proponents of empowerment reject a top-down approach to development and value the mobilization of the disempowered and their participation in problem solving. It is important to understand that this does not imply that all improvements in women's position must be brought about through the actions of women themselves or that empowering themselves is the responsibility of individual women.

While the World Bank has identified empowerment as one of the key constituent elements of poverty reduction, and as a primary development assistance goal (Narayan, 2002: 11), Sen (1999) adds "agency and freedom as main components of empowerment and development" (Sen, 1999: 47). In fact, human agency is a central concept in Sen's characterisation of development as the process of removing various types of "unfreedoms" that constrain individual choice and agency (Sen, 1999: 35). Kabeer's (2001) view on women's empowerment draws on Sen's understanding of agency as well as his conceptualisation of the links between individual agency and public action (Kabeer, 2001: 169)

In identifying agency as the essence of women's empowerment, the idea is not that all improvements in women's position must be brought about through the actions of women themselves or that empowering themselves is the responsibility of individual women. In fact, there is ample justification for governments and multilaterals to promote policies that strengthen gender equality through various means, including legal and political reform, and interventions to give women (and other socially excluded groups) greater access to resources. Indeed, national and international institutions have the responsibility for ensuring the

inclusion of disadvantaged populations socially, economically, and politically. As I argued earlier, the major reason for the emphasis on agency as the defining criterion, is because of the many examples in the literature of cases in which giving women access to resources does not lead to their greater control over resources, where changes in legal statutes have little influence on practice, and where female political leaders do not necessarily work to promote women's interests.

Thus while resources - economic, social, and political - are often critical in ensuring that women are empowered, they are not always sufficient. Without women's individual or collective ability to recognize and utilise resources in their own interests, resources alone cannot bring about empowerment. Chapter seven will show how the effective participation of women in the activities of cooperatives has helped improve the quality of life in rural communities, because they are agents in improving their vulnerability situation.

In view of the above, one can say that agency is the cornerstone of the empowerment process. While distinctions such as those between "resources, agency, and achievements" (Kabeer 2001) or "sources versus evidence" of empowerment seem clear at the conceptual level, it is not always easy to completely separate them in developing empowerment indicators (Kabeer, 2001: 189). And too, a given variable may function as an indicator of women's access to resources (or an enabling factor) in one context, of women's agency in another, and may represent an achievement in still other contexts. For example, microcredit programs and employment opportunities are often seen as resources for women's empowerment. Sadler (2004) shows that if a woman seeks to gain access to microcredit, or to get a job, then getting the job or joining the credit program might be best characterised as a manifestation of women's agency, and the benefits she draws as a result - income, discretionary spending, healthcare - as achievements (Sadler, 2004: <http://www.unifem.org/index.php>).

As will be seen later in chapter seven, women's economic contribution is treated as an enabling factor and used to predict other outcomes such as control over important decisions and even the outcomes of decisions. But in other contexts women's economic contribution would be more accurately described as a form of agency or, again, as an achievement. Similarly, Kishor (2000a) mentions that assets owned could function as sources of empowerment but they could also constitute evidence that empowerment has been achieved (Kishor, 2000a: 167). The meaning of any empowerment indicator will always depend on its

interrelationships with other variables. In fact, empowerment is a dynamic process. Batliwala (1993) highlights that separating the process into components (such as enabling factors, agency and outcomes) may be useful in identifying policy interventions to support empowerment, and for evaluating the impact of such interventions, but it is important to realize that a framework for research or evaluation of a specific policy or intervention will refer to only one phase of the process. Batliwala adds that which phase it refers to will depend on the context, the interventions being assessed, and the outcomes of interest (Batliwala, 1993: 127-138)

However, while suggesting that agency should be treated as the essence of empowerment, one can also acknowledge that the dimensions of empowerment are very broad in scope, and within each dimension, there is a range of sub-domains within which women may be empowered. So, for example, the “socio-cultural” dimension covers a range of empowerment sub-domains, from marriage systems to norms regarding women’s physical mobility, to non-familial social support systems and networks available to women. Moreover, Bennett (2002) mentions that, “in order to operationalise these dimensions, one should consider indicators at various levels of the society - the household and the community, as well as regional, national, and even global levels” (Bennett, 2002: 237).

2.1.5.3 Conceptualizing women’s empowerment

Bennett (2002) has developed a framework in which empowerment and social inclusion are closely related but separate concepts. Drawing on Narayan (2002), Bennett describes empowerment as “the enhancement of assets and capabilities of diverse individuals and groups to engage, influence and hold accountable the institutions which affect them” (Narayan, 2002a: 173). Social inclusion is defined as “the removal of institutional barriers and the enhancement of incentives to increase the access of diverse individuals and groups to assets and development opportunities” (Narayan, 2002a: 91). Bennett (2002) notes that both of these definitions are intended to be operational, and describe processes rather than end points. The empowerment process, as she characterises it, operates “from below” and involves agency, as exercised by individuals and groups and social inclusion, in contrast, requires a change which may be initiated “from above” (Bannet, 2002: 96). Narayan, in his discussion of pro-poor growth, also argues that change is necessary to sustain empowerment over time (Narayan (ed), 2002: 94). Narayan adds that it is through the process of social

inclusion that the “rules of the game” are modified and institutions transformed so that economic growth is widely shared (ibid.).

In general, women do not take a central place in much of the literature on social inclusion or empowerment. While clearly, the broad reference to empowerment as the expansion of freedom of choice and action, as articulated in the World Bank’s Sourcebook on Empowerment and Poverty Reduction (Narayan, 1989: 256-272), applies to women as well as other disadvantaged or socially excluded groups, it is important to acknowledge that women’s empowerment encompasses some unique additional elements. On the one hand, Sen (1987) mentions that women are not just one group amongst several disempowered subsets of society (the poor, ethnic minorities, etc.); they are a cross-cutting category of individuals that overlaps with all these other groups (Sen, 1987: 254). On the other hand, Batliwala (1993) argues that household and interfamilial relations are a central locus of women’s disempowerment in a way that is not true for other disadvantaged groups (Batliwala, 1993: 17). This means that efforts at empowering women must be especially cognizant of the implications of broader policy action at the household level.

In fact, development cooperation agencies have begun to focus on the development of indicators for assessing gender equality, in some cases ‘empowerment indicators’, and there is a growing body of literature in which efforts have been made to clearly define the concept of empowerment. This literature emerges from both activist and research writings. A diverse body of research has emerged on measuring empowerment and relating it to other variables of interest in international development. Nevertheless, given the diversity in the emphases and agendas in discussions on women’s empowerment, a greater consensus was found in the literature on its conceptualization than expected. There is a nexus of a few key, overlapping terms that are most often included in defining empowerment: options, choice, control, and power. Most of these are referring to women’s ability to make decisions and affect outcomes of importance to themselves and their families. Mullen (1999) shows that control over one’s own life and over resources is often stressed and thus, there is frequent reference to some variant of the ability to “affect one’s own well being,” and “make strategic life choices” (Mullen, 1999: 87). For example, Sen (1987) defines empowerment as “altering relations of power...which constrain women’s options and autonomy and adversely affect health and well-being” (Sen, 1987:38). Batliwala’s (1993) definition is in terms of “how much influence people have over external actions that matter to their welfare” (Batliwala, 1993:

89). Rowlands (1997) describes it as “a process whereby women become able to organize themselves to increase their own self-reliance, to assert their independent right to make choices and to control resources which will assist in challenging and eliminating their own subordination” (Rowlands, 1997: 35).

However, one reason why the degree of consensus on the conceptualization of empowerment is not readily apparent in the literature is because of the variation in terminology used to encompass it. Jejeebhoy (1996) considers autonomy and empowerment as more or less equal terms, and defines both in terms of women “gaining control of their own lives vis-à-vis family, community, society, markets” (Jejeebhoy, 1996: 62). In contrast, other authors have explicitly argued that autonomy is not equivalent to empowerment, stressing that autonomy implies independence whereas empowerment may well be achieved through interdependence (e.g. Malhotra, 1995: 24 and Kabeer, 1994: 49).

Another element of empowerment that distinguishes it from other concepts is agency - women themselves being significant actors in the process of change. Thus, theoretically there could be an improvement in indicators of gender equality, but unless the intervening processes involved women as agents of that change rather than merely as its recipients, it is could not be considered as empowerment. The relevance of agency in the discourse on empowerment emerges from “bottom up” rather than “top down” approaches toward development. At the institutional and summative levels, it emphasises the importance of participation and “social inclusion” (e.g. Chambers 1997 & Narayan et al. 2000a). In fact, at the micro level, it is embedded in the idea of self-efficacy and the significance of the realisation by individual women that they can be the agents of change in their own lives.

2.1.6 Millennium Development Goal 3 (MDG3)

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) are eight goals to be achieved by 2015 that respond to the world's main development challenges. The MDGs are drawn from the actions and targets contained in the Millennium Declaration that was adopted by 189 nations-and signed by 147 heads of state and governments during the UN Millennium Summit in September 2000. These goals are rooted in international consensus on universal entitlements, centred on global justice and human rights. These goals include the right to education, gender

equality, survival and to a decent standard of living. The concern of this research is Goal 3 which is “to promote gender equality and empower women” (Fukuda-Parr, 2008: 173)

The problem here is that, despite the fact that “gender equality and education for women” were mentioned in the Beijing Platform of Action and the MDGs adopted it again as Goal 3, more than a decade later, the agenda on women’s empowerment pledged in Cairo and Beijing remain largely unfulfilled in many countries, Rwanda included. In fact, as a recent review undertaken as part of the United Nations Millennium Project shows, in a majority of developing countries, women and girls continue to be disadvantaged as compared to men and boys on indicators such as primary and secondary school enrollment and completion, access to jobs in the formal labor market, the right to own and control land and housing, representation in political and decision-making bodies, and the prevalence of sexual and other forms of violence (UN Millennium Project (2005): <http://www.escwa.un.org/divisions/scu/genderMDG>).

No-one can doubt how education is the cornerstone of the above factors, but still many countries are challenged to achieve this critical goal. The Rwandan government tried to achieve this goal by the elimination of school fees at the primary level, hoping this could be the decisive factor in raising overall enrolment rates and in reaching gender parity at the primary level and by deduction, achieving the Millennium Development Goal 3. Yet, according to a 2005 Citizen Report Card survey, 42 percent of households report that the costs associated with primary education, such as books, uniforms, and school lunches were too high. In view of this, the survey indicates that 35 percent of Rwandan families withdraw their children before they complete primary schooling because of the inability to afford these costs. This shows that poverty remains a significant barrier to particular disadvantaged groups, such as orphan-headed households or street children, and generally prevents them from accessing education at any level. Many poor families can only afford to educate a few of their children. In many cases, sons are often chosen over daughters, both out of patriarchal social traditions, and because boys are likely to find more employment opportunities and earn higher average wages in the future. The reality will be shown in chapter seven, where it is demonstrated how women involved in cooperatives have taken their children back to school after years of withdrawal due to the problem of the school fees.

However, if the above reality is found in Rwanda which is among the best countries in the world in terms of empowerment of women and the leader in the world for political empowerment of women, with 54% women representatives in parliament, one can imagine what is happening in many other patriarchal societies in Africa. The attempt to respond to Goal 3 of the MDGs by involving women in technology, which is currently dominating in the fields of education marketable in the workplace, still has some challenges in Rwanda. This is proved by the empowerment programme in the table 3 (see next page) which shows the participation of girls /women in Science and Technology Courses at KIST (Kigali Institute of Sciences and Technology) by gender, in 2007.

Table 3: participation of girls /women in Science and Technology

Eng. = engineering Wom. = Women Sc. = Sciences

Women in Sciences and technology	Total	Women	Men	Direct women	Women in EP	% of women	% of women after EP	Wom. % increase due to EP
Biology	71	35	38	16	22	29.6	47.9	8.3
Chemistry	84	39	45	19	20	29.7	46.4	16.7
Civil eng.	89	18	71	15	3	17.4	20.2	2.8
Computer Sc.	89	21	68	18	3	20.2	23.6	2.7
Electrical eng.	77	31	46	26	5	36.1	40.3	4.2
Electronics	74	15	59	12	3	16.9	20.3	3.4
Food Sc.	78	37	41	22	15	34.9	47.4	12.5
Maths	71	29	42	22	7	34.4	40.8	6.4
Mechanical eng.	77	19	58	16	3	21.6	24.7	3.1
Physics	71	21	50	14	7	21.9	29.6	7.7
Technical education and entrepreneurship	71	0	71	0	0	0	0	0

Source: KIST (Kigali Institute of Science and Technology), 2007

It can be observed that there is still a shortage of young women from the empowerment programme especially in the field of sciences. Women admitted under the empowerment programme constitute only 3.6 percent of all students admitted in the engineering disciplines and 23.3 percent of those admitted in science disciplines. It can also be observed that with this single intervention, some programmes have nearly bridged the gender imbalance, increasing the proportion of women enrolled in certain subjects from under 30 percent to near parity. Such programmes are biology, chemistry and food science, which are life sciences. With the exception of physics, all other science disciplines have attained 40% of women's participation. However, since admissions are based on preferences as well as performance, it is possible that within the science and engineering disciplines gender stereotyping continues to be a problem. Hence, even with a functioning empowerment programme, there is a need to address the lack of women in these programmes.

The inclusion of a goal explicitly calling for gender equality and the empowerment of women in the Millennium Development Goals (Goal 3) is a reminder of that unfulfilled agenda and of promises not kept, and also a reminder of a new opportunity for countries in Africa to examine why progress on this goal has been lagging and how it can be accelerated. Mayra et al. (2009) suggests that the “what,” the “why,” and the “how” of empowerment need further elucidation (Mayra et al. 2009:1). According to Mayra et al. (2009), the key reasons for the lack of progress are:

- a lack of clarity about the meaning of the term ‘empowerment’
- a lack of conviction about investments in women's empowerment and gender equality being critical for reducing poverty and achieving overall social and economic development; and
- confusion about the most effective ways to translate the empowerment of women into operational programs and policies (Mayra et al., 2009: 36).

MDGs have been challenged by different factors and have different criticisms. In fact, even though the promotion of the MDGs was a global consensus framework, it has been perceived by civil society as a top-down approach. Many civil society organisations, including women's organisations, had been actively involved in the series of UN conferences that took place in the 1990s and deeply committed to the frameworks and principles which had emerged from them. The MDGs, by contrast, were adopted by the world's political leaders with very little involvement from their civil society constituency. Efforts were being made after the event to

'sell' the MDGs to civil society through the setting up of a campaign structure but it was clear that many sections of civil society, but those representing subordinate and marginalised groups in particular, felt betrayed by both process and content (Hulme, 2009: 129).

Additionally, apart from the unwillingness of governments to implement women's empowerment policies, another challenging issue is connected to the fragility of the poorest countries. Indeed, many of the world's poorest countries can be described as situations of fragility "lacking the capacity or will to fulfill their basic functions, meet their obligations and responsibilities regarding service delivery, management of resources, rule of law, equitable access to power, security and safety of the populace and protect and promote citizens' rights and freedoms" (Ravallion and Chen, 2008: 10-36). Recent reports and analysis show that the MDGs' achievement gap is much larger in situations of fragility. Many fragile countries still need to meet the very basic conditions of stability and establish a minimum institutional framework to begin reducing poverty and make headway on the MDGs. Uneven progress on the various MDG indicators across regions and countries is partly explained by the distinction between fragile and non-fragile countries.

Indeed, fragility exacerbates poverty, has disproportionate impacts on vulnerable groups and often leads to reversals in progress on the MDGs. The World Bank Global Monitoring Report (2007) reports that 27% of the extreme poor in developing countries live in fragile states, and poverty reduction in these countries will remain out of reach unless fragile states become less vulnerable to adverse shocks, and they increase their capacity to absorb external funds and to mobilize internal resources. Moreover, "negative spill-over effects from these countries - the trafficking of people, drugs, criminality and terrorism and the impact on international trade, development and stability - can be enormous" (World Bank Global Monitoring Report, 2007)

The causality between state fragility, state failure and vulnerability is complex and it is not easy to isolate what causes what. Fragility makes it difficult to implement proper development strategies and to achieve equitable and sustainable economic growth. Development work in fragile situations requires sustained engagement and new, imaginative use of combined political, technical, financial and sometimes military resources, engaging with governments but also civil society and non-state actors. Though fragile countries have very dissimilar conditions, Guillaumont (2008) shows that "they often share institutional instability, which undermines the predictability, transparency and accountability of public

decision-making processes and the provision of security and social services to the population” (Guillaumont, November 2008). Apart from external causes, another challenge is connected to domestic policy responses in developing countries. Indeed, domestic policies are crucial to accelerate progress on the MDGs, take advantage of opportunities offered by the global economy and use aid as effectively as possible. One set of policies cannot fit all countries, and country specificity in terms both of opportunities and constraints should be recognised and taken on board.

Weak governance is one of the major obstacles to achieving the Millennium Development Goals generally and Goal 3 specifically. In fact, without a reinforced commitment to fully respecting human rights, democratic principles, the rule of law and good governance, efforts to assist developing countries and their populations affected by the global crisis will fall short. The principles of sound democratic governance hold that the state be responsive and accountable and should facilitate civil society participation in efforts to alleviate the impacts of the financial crisis. In response to rising food prices, some countries began to take protective policy measures designed to reduce the impact of rising world food commodity prices on their own consumers (Engberg et al, 2008: 237). Some countries responded by building on their existing social protection systems, reflecting a growing consensus on their importance.

According to Engberg et al. (2008), there is a growing recognition that most social protection programmes across the world lack a clear mechanism to deal with the “new poor”, pushed into poverty by the aggregate shocks. Policy adjustments are often made in an ad-hoc fashion after the event, indicating that the “vulnerable near-poor” do not receive adequate social protection. In response to the financial crisis, many developed and emerging countries have drafted fiscal stimulus packages to boost consumer and business demand. The link between the global economic environment and the level and effectiveness of aid, coupled with national policies, is crucial to achieving the MDGs. Therefore it is important to look not solely at new national policies to respond to crises but also at the sustainability of policies addressing the MDGs (Engberg et al, 2008: 242).

From the above facts, it is clear that policy formulation alone cannot achieve sustainable development and women’s empowerment. In other words, there is a big difference between policy formulation and policy implementation. Hence, women and the poor in general need

the freedom to choose a developmental approach which is appropriate to their needs, in accordance with their capacity.

One strategy through which this can be realized is through women being involved in cooperatives, given the fact that “a cooperative is as an autonomous association of persons - united voluntarily to meet their common economic, social and cultural needs and aspirations through a jointly-owned and democratically-controlled economic or business enterprise” (MacPherson 1996:73). Being independent of government and private firms, cooperatives can formulate their policies and rules, and change them when necessary. In the following chapters, the values and principles of cooperatives, and their capacity to shape an organizational culture that promotes women’s empowerment, and hence gender equity and equality, will be discussed. Because the values and principles of cooperatives are viewed as capable of contributing to women’s empowerment, cooperatives can be considered as a potentially enabling environment and a potential vehicle of women’s empowerment. In the same way, gender equity and equality can be considered as key factors in the success of cooperatives. More details will be found in chapter four of this research.

2.2 Methodological framework for analysis

The theoretical framework discussed the concepts of gender, and gender and development. These theories were discussed in the literature related to the topic of this research, in order to situate this research project within a conceptual and theoretical context. The theoretical framework is related to the methodological framework for the research, given the fact that the two frameworks opt for an inclusive development where women and men, the rich and the poor, benefit equally from the outcomes of development.

There are three theoretical frameworks that are used to analyse the data in this research. These are Sustainable Livelihoods Framework (SLF), Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) and the “Dialogical Action theory” of Paulo Freire.

The concept of sustainable livelihoods has been developed in the context of poverty alleviation, and developmental agencies and governments are increasingly using it in the design of policies, projects and programmes. Its adoption has been accompanied by a lively debate as to exactly what the term sustainable livelihoods means. Ashley and Carney (1999) define the concept of sustainable livelihoods as “an analytical tool comprising a set of core principles embedded within an overall theoretical framework” (Ashley and Carney 1999: 145). Chambers (1989) mentions that there are other contending views but increasing numbers of academics and development practitioners are open to the use of the term to enhance understanding of individual, household or community efforts to achieve day-to-day survival and long-term betterment in a developing country context (Chambers, 1989).

In this research, SLF will be used a tool for analysis of how women in Mayaga region and Rwanda as a whole can meet their needs and address their livelihoods challenges in a sustainable way through involvement in cooperatives. SLF is chosen as a tool for analysis of women’s empowerment, given that the concept of ‘livelihood’ encompasses a means of living or of supporting life and meeting individual and community needs, and that SLF provides new perspectives on developing healthy sustainable societies that provide people with secure and satisfying livelihoods. The framework shows how, in different contexts, women can achieve sustainable livelihoods through access to a range of livelihood resources (natural, financial, human and social capital) which are combined in the pursuit of different livelihood strategies.

Central to the framework is the analysis of the range of formal and informal organizational and institutional factors that influence sustainable livelihood outcomes (Greeley, 2003). SLF shows the main factors that affect women’s livelihoods in Mayaga region and Rwanda as a whole, and the relationships between them. In the process of data analysis, this study will discuss the main elements of SLF, namely: “vulnerability context, asset portfolios, transforming structures and processes, livelihood strategies and livelihood outcomes” are used (DFID/Department for International Development, 1997: <http://www.livelihoods.org/info/infoguidancesheets.html#1>).

2.2.1 Sustainable Livelihoods Framework (SLF)

2.2.1.2 Definition of SLF

Answers to questions of what are sustainable livelihoods and how can they be achieved, ideally and practically, can be drawn from several approaches. But while sustainable livelihoods may mean many things to many people, what is common between the various approaches, as noted by Ashley and Carney (1999), “is a call to reduce the complexity and uncertainty that gives rise to demands for sustainable livelihoods in the first place” (Ashley and Carney, 1999: 67). However, the first elaborated definition of the concept of sustainable livelihoods reads: “a livelihood comprises the capabilities, assets (stores, resources, claims and access) and activities required for a means of living. A livelihood is sustainable when it can cope with and recover from stress and shocks, maintain or enhance its capabilities and assets, and provide sustainable livelihood opportunities for the next generation; and which contributes net benefits to other livelihoods at the local and global levels and in the short and long term”(Chambers and Conway,1991: 6). Whatever the precise terminology, the common denominator is that a livelihood comprises the capabilities, assets and activities required for a means of living. SL is still evolving as an idea and a methodology, but many international development agencies have adopted it in project appraisal and review, and it is steadily becoming part of the mainstream of development planning. The good reputation of this framework is due to the fact that it deals with the livelihood of people in an environmentally friendly context.

Thus, the sustainable livelihoods approach is a holistic approach that will be used in this research to examine the way women are overcoming poverty by creating sustainable livelihoods. In addition, it tries to sketch out the relationships between the different manifestations of the poverty of women in Mayaga region, allowing for more effective prioritisation of action at an operational level. The Sustainable Livelihoods Support Office argues that the “SL approach (or approaches – given that there is no set way of doing things) aims to help poor people achieve lasting livelihood improvements, sustainable livelihoods - measured using poverty indicators that they, themselves, define” (Sustainable Livelihoods Support Office, 2003: www.odi.org.uk/resources/download/144.pdf). Chapter seven will show in details how women in Mayaga region deal with their vulnerability context through their involvement in cooperatives. Asset or capacity building models which are discussed in

this framework and in this research focus attention on developing the underlying resources and capacities needed to escape poverty on a sustainable basis. These resources and capacities depict the critical mass of assets needed to cope with stresses and shocks, and to maintain and enhance capabilities now and in the future, not only for women in Mayaga region, but for the country as a whole.

The Department for International Development (DFID) highlights that, according to the philosophy of SLF, “everyone (even the so-called disabled) has assets on which to build and support individuals and families to acquire assets needed for long-term well-being” (DFID, 1999: <http://www.livelihoods.org/info/infoguidancesheets.html#1>). This position of DFID reinforces the idea that the assets and skills of women are needed in the development process.

The choice of this framework in this research is further justified by the fact that it is an attractive model providing a simple but well-developed way of thinking about a complex issue. It is also attractive because it can be applied at various levels of detail – as a broad conceptual framework or as a practical tool for designing programs and evaluation strategies (Murray and Ferguson, 2001:<http://www.cdnwomen.org/eng/3/>).

The sustainable livelihoods approach has emerged as an alternative way of conceptualizing poverty alleviation, including its context, objectives and priorities. It focuses on one of the most fundamental aspects of life: the ability of people to support themselves, both now and into the future. Ashley and Carney (1999) highlight that “SLA does so in a manner that views livelihoods within both micro- and macro-contexts, spanning both physical and social environments at the local to the global levels” (Ashley and Carney, 1999: 75). In this context of women’s empowerment, the building of livelihoods reflects and seeks to fulfil both material and experiential needs. However, Chambers and Conway (1999) show that livelihoods are not simply a localized phenomenon, but this links in to the Rwandan government policy and institutional context, the limitations of Rwanda’s position in the global economy and the constraints posed by the World Bank etc outlined in Chapter four. Chambers and Conway (1999) argue that “the sustainability of a livelihood is ascertained by its sensitivity, hardiness and resiliency in the face of short- and long-term challenges” (Chambers and Conway, 1999: 47).

Indeed, the question of a livelihood's capacity for sustainability involves evaluating current circumstances and assessing future trends, as well as past conditions and patterns. The only way to do so effectively is to put people at the centre of development, thereby increasing the effectiveness of development assistance and by decreasing the vulnerability context of poor people (Bebbington, 1999: 221-244). In the context of this research, the researcher uses SLF framework to examine the assets that women working in cooperatives in Mayaga region possess and the way they help them to deal with their vulnerability context.

Rwandan households' livelihoods are usually based on subsistence agriculture. For some families in rural trading centers, a family survives by sending its children to sell goods on the street, while the mother grows food in a garden around their house due to lack of enough land for farming. In one of the districts of Mayaga region (Gisagara), most of the families only have a very small piece of land nearby their households, mostly people who were expropriated from Butare city under the Belgian colony. Livelihoods are rarely limited to one secure job in a wage-based economy. Within the households, assets and capabilities are closely linked. In fact, you may have assets (land or even money) but not have knowledge, skill, and ability to use them efficiently. Moreover, one may have a job but not having a characteristic associated with desirable performance on that job, such as problem solving, analytical thinking, or leadership. It is in this context that this research suggests that households may have assets but can lack the capabilities to use them optimally.

While using SLF as a theoretical framework in the methodology, this research will investigate and categorise the range of assets to which women in Mayaga region have access, by identifying how access to a diverse spread of assets is a key factor that contributes to their livelihood security and by extension to the security of the whole household that they come from. This research will isolate the capabilities that enable women involved in cooperatives to make optimum use of their asset base and the factors that limit their ability to sustain their livelihoods.

2.2.2.3 Sustainable Livelihoods Framework (vulnerability context and assets portfolios)

i. Vulnerability Context

Robert Chambers defines vulnerability as: “defencelessness, insecurity and exposure to risk, shocks and stress... and difficulty in coping with them” (Chambers, 1989: 17). Furthermore, Chambers (1989) shows that “vulnerability has two sides: an external side of risks, shocks and stress to which an individual or household is subject and an internal side which is defencelessness, meaning a lack of means to cope with damaging loss” (Chambers, 1989: 21). In the views of Chambers, people can control and manage the factors that contribute to vulnerability and the researcher somehow agrees with him. In fact, in the 1970s, there was a community system of keeping the food that may help when unexpected hunger happens. This system was known as “ibigega” or food stocks. Now the local government is mobilising the community to establish “ibigega” again, because there are very few in contemporary Rwanda and some areas do not even know anything about this system. However, Chambers (1989) states that “people’s livelihoods and the wider availability of assets are fundamentally affected by critical trends as well as by shocks and seasonality – over which they have limited or no control” (Chambers, 1989: 26).

People may be prepared to reduce the risks of shocks caused by some natural hazards. For instance, in the example of an earthquake, even if this natural hazard doesn’t predict, the public can still be educated on the causes and characteristics of an earthquake and what they should do if one occurs. Nearly every community has means of communicating with its most remotely located citizens, whether through media or informal communication networks.

The above argument does not exclude that vulnerability may be caused by factors which are outside people’s control. It is usually negative but it can also provide positive opportunities. The researcher’s opinion is that it is not objective risk that matters, but people’s subjective assessments of things that make them vulnerable. These matter because both perceived and actual vulnerability can influence people’s decisions and hence their livelihood strategies.

Talking about vulnerability, other authors like Barnett and Blaikie (1992) include a sense of insecurity; the lack of a sense of voice vis-à-vis other members of their household,

community or government; and levels of health, literacy, education, and access to assets, many of which are influenced by the scope and quality of service delivery (Barnett and Blaikie, 1992:75). Chambers (1991) approves this by highlighting “dissatisfaction with the income/consumption model gave rise to the basic needs perspectives which go far beyond income, and include the need for basic health and education, clean water and other services which are required to prevent people from falling into poverty”(Chambers,1987). He adds that “more recently, poverty has been defined in terms of the absence of basic capabilities to meet these physical needs, but also to achieve goals of participating in the life of the community and influencing decision-taking” (Chambers, 1991: 175)

A sustainable livelihoods approach draws on this improved understanding of poverty, but also on other streams of analysis, relating for instance to households, gender, governance and farming systems, bringing together relevant concepts to allow poverty to be understood more holistically. The livelihoods framework is not intended to depict reality in any specific setting. It is, rather, intended as an analytical structure for coming to grips with the complexity of livelihoods, understanding influences on poverty and identifying where interventions can best be made. The assumption is that “people pursue a range of livelihood outcomes (health, income, reduced vulnerability, etc.) by drawing on a range of assets to pursue a variety of activities. The activities they adopt and the way they reinvest in asset-building are driven in part by their own preferences and priorities” (Chambers, *ibid.* 186).

Nevertheless, as mentioned above, they are also influenced by the types of vulnerability, including shocks (such as drought), overall trends (in, for instance, resource stocks) and seasonal variations. Options are also determined by the structures (such as the roles of government or of the private sector) and processes (such as institutional, policy and cultural factors) which people face. In aggregate, these conditions determine their access to assets and livelihood opportunities, and the way in which these can be converted into outcomes. In this way, poverty, and the opportunities to escape from it, depends on all of the above.

According to Chambers (1991), other practitioners strongly disagree with the way this view makes people seem powerless (Chambers, 1991: *ibid.*). These practitioners say that people do have some control because they can prepare for and react to the factors that contribute to the vulnerability context. For example, if people understand and plan for drought and seasonal

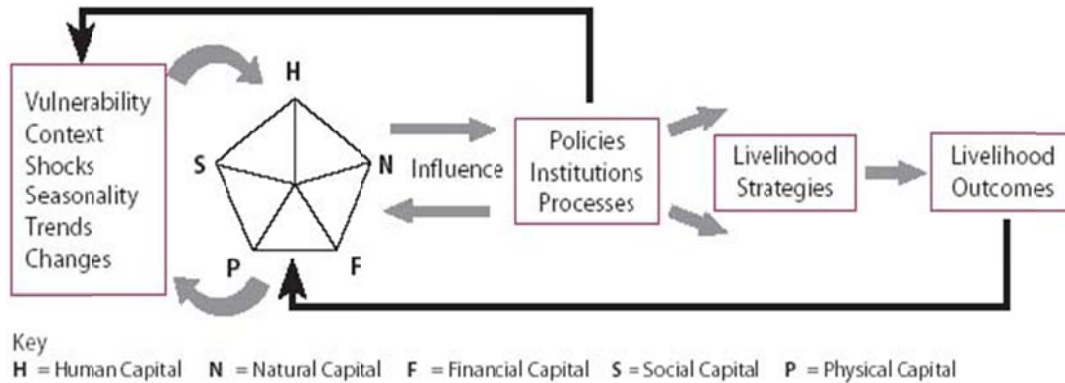
variability, they can modify the activities that might be affected. They might use drought-resistant crop varieties or methods which save water. Likewise, if people understand the source of external threats, shocks and stresses, they can decide to do something to remove the threat (Murray and Ferguson, 2001: <http://www.cdnwomen.org/eng/3/3h.asp>). However, poor people may lack means to set up strategies to mitigate the negative effects of the threat.

Assessing the local vulnerability context is a key part of livelihoods analysis. The poor are constantly insecure but there are certain factors and trends that can make their insecurity much deeper. Vulnerability assessment involves an analysis of factors and long-term trends. Many of these factors come from several levels away from the immediate environment. Barnett & Blaikie (1992) mention that these include factors such as: climate change, seasonal variability, drought and floods, epidemics, political conflict, tenure insecurity, or government macroeconomic policies that promote retrenchment, inflate consumer prices or devalue the currency; or conservation policy that restricts access to key resources and livelihood opportunities (Barnett & Blaikie, 1992: 279). Understanding the vulnerability context is fundamental to being able to design interventions that have a lasting, positive effect on household livelihood security.

Putting all the above views together, one can argue that the sustainable livelihoods approach provides an analytical framework that promotes systematic analysis of (1) the underlying processes and causes of poverty, and poverty implies not just levels of material deprivation but above all the negation of rights, (2) the fundamental strategies that can make the livelihoods sustainable. The factors that create and perpetuate vulnerability and poverty can be seen at two levels: that of the individual and her circumstances, and that of the broader context. This vulnerability context of cycles, systems, trends and shocks undermines stability and security of the individual, and is often beyond her immediate control.

Vulnerability context, together with other SLF assets portfolios are illustrated in the diagram below:

Diagram 1: SLF assets portfolios



Source: Chambers and Conway, 1991: 35

The above diagram presents three main categories of external: trends, shocks and seasonality. Firstly, trends are long term and usually large scale. They may include trends in population, resource acquisition and use (including conflict over resources), economics (national and international), governance and politics, technology and the environment (e.g., climate change). Secondly, shocks include human health shocks (e.g., epidemics), natural shocks (e.g., natural hazard-induced disasters), economic shocks (e.g., rapid changes in exchange rates), and conflict and crop/livestock health shocks. They can destroy assets directly (e.g., in the case of floods or storms). They can also force people to dispose of assets as part of coping strategies. Resilience to external shocks and stresses is an important factor in livelihood sustainability. Thirdly, seasonality is expressed through seasonal shifts in prices, production, food availability, employment opportunities and health (Lowe and Schilderman, 2001: 19).

ii. Assets portfolios

The asset base upon which people build their livelihoods includes a wider range of assets than are usually considered. Rather than looking only at land or other classic wealth indicators, the sustainable livelihoods framework suggests consideration of an asset portfolio of five different types of assets/capitals (financial, social, physical, natural and human capitals):

- Natural (Environmental) Capital: Natural resources (land, water, wildlife, biodiversity, environmental resources).
- Physical Capital: Basic infrastructure (water, sanitation, energy, transport, communications), housing and the means and equipment of production.
- Human Capital: Health, knowledge, skills, information, ability to labour.
- Social Capital: Social resources (relationships of trust, membership of groups, networks, access to wider institutions).
- Financial Capital: financial resources available (regular remittances or pensions, savings, supplies of credit) (Lowe and Schilderman, 2001: 27)

Though most versions of the sustainable livelihoods framework are limited to these five kinds of capital, some add political capital as a sixth type of asset, which can include, for example, citizenship, enfranchisement, and membership in political parties - all assets that can be key in obtaining or operationalizing rights over other assets (Lowe and Schilderman, 2001: 19). In the context of this research, the way the political capital is an important asset is confirmed by the fact that the national government policy on gender and women's representation in government reinforced the rest of the assets that women possessed in Rwanda. Fox (1996) makes it clear that there are communities with space for political movements having more room to gain livelihoods. By subtracting politics, assets can be used by some people to exclude others (Fox, 1996: 1089).

The above assets constitute livelihood building blocks. To a limited extent they can be substituted for each other. Thus, the poor may draw on social capital such as family or neighborhood security mechanisms at times when financial capital is in short supply. Within this context, people are likely to pursue multiple activities and outcomes. They may, for instance, depend on their own farming, on selling their labour locally, or on migration, all within the same year. Outcomes will not be simply monetary, nor even tangible in all cases; they may also encompass a sense of being empowered to make broader, or clearer, choices (Department for International Development, 1999: http://www.livelihoods.org/info/info_guidancesheets.html#1.)

A number of modifications to the assets categories that underpin SL theory are suggested by McLeod (2001), and she proposes the addition of two new assets: institutional knowledge and institutional or political capital (McLeod, 2001: 12). Some even add spiritual capital. Lowe and Schilderman (2001) likewise believe that information, knowledge and skills in the human asset base do not receive the prominence they warrant (Lowe and Schilderman, 2001: 15). The SL approach nevertheless offers both a conceptual and programming framework for sustainable poverty reduction. A UNDP report shows that, unlike more traditional approaches that have sought to tackle poverty by identifying and addressing needs of poor people, the SL approach seeks to improve their lives by building on what they have - their assets (UNDP, 1999). As expounded by Murray and Ferguson (2001), an SL approach:

- (i) captures the importance of the micro-level institutional context in mediating the impacts of the macro-level economic and institutional environment on the well-being of particular individuals and social groups;
- (ii) situates assets in their broader context, focusing on their contribution to realizing the livelihood outcomes of the poor; and
- (iii) “encapsulates the dynamics and multiple dimensions of poverty, ill-being and deprivation (both material dimensions such as low income/ consumption levels, and non-material dimensions such as powerlessness and social exclusion” (Murray and Ferguson, 2001: *ibid.*)

In view of the above, equity in the distribution of assets is needed. Indeed, the distribution of productive assets is important; conventionally, it is described as physical or financial capital such as land, productive inputs, savings and credit. Allen and Satter (2002) argue that equity is also about the distribution of human capital such as health and education, and that income inequality reflects deeper inequalities in access to opportunities for health, education and production (Allen and Satter, 2002: 273). Hence, equity is also about the creation of opportunities for health, education and production, among other things, and by deduction, improved access to education and better health enable poor people to contribute more fully to the process of sustainable livelihoods and development.

iii. Policies, institutions, and processes

Policies, institutions, and processes affect how people use their assets in pursuit of different livelihood strategies. In the above diagram (see page 176) policies, institutions and processes refer to both formal and informal institutions and organizations that shape livelihoods by influencing access to assets, livelihood strategies, vulnerability, and terms of exchange. They may occur at multiple levels, from the household to community, national, and even global levels. The public and private sectors, civil society, and community institutions may all be relevant considerations; laws as well as culture can also be included.

Policy-determining structures cannot be effective in the absence of appropriate institutions and processes through which policies can be implemented. Processes are important to every aspect of livelihoods. They provide incentives that stimulate people to make better choices. They grant or deny access to assets. They enable people to transform one type of asset into another through markets. They have a strong influence on interpersonal relations. One of the main problems the poor and vulnerable face is that the processes which frame their livelihoods may systematically restrict them unless the government adopts pro-poor policies that, in turn, filter down to legislation and even less formal processes (DFID, 1999: *ibid.*).

In this research context, individual women from the cooperatives and households are embedded in a specific context made up of exposure to risks and opportunities on the one hand, and to services and policies, institutions, organizations, processes and structures on the other hand. These influence the way in which women or their households can use a combination of assets to develop a particular livelihood activity or coping strategy. The way in which these components link together to influence an individual's or household's livelihood options, activities and outcomes is mediated by a range of transforming institutions and processes operating at all levels from the household to the international arena. Such institutions and processes have a profound influence on access (e.g. to assets, to livelihood strategies), on terms of exchange between different forms of assets, and on returns to a given livelihood strategy. However, this is not a simple one-way relationship. Individuals and groups themselves influence institutions and processes, as is shown in the diagram by feedback loops.

iv. Livelihood strategies

Policies, institutions and processes influence people's livelihood strategies, i.e., the choices that people employ in pursuit of income, security, well-being, and other productive and reproductive goals. As discussed above, what is important about the livelihood strategies approach is that it recognizes that households and individuals may pursue multiple strategies, sequentially or simultaneously. This means that, even in the context of agricultural research, we should not assume that someone is automatically a farmer, or that people with other businesses are not involved in farming. Nor should we overlook even small livelihood strategies, because they can be very important, especially for the poor, who often pursue many livelihood strategies either to make up enough income or to provide a measure of security. The pursuit of multiple activities can have important implications for cash and labor availability at different times of the year, and for the relevance of specific development interventions for poverty reduction.

v. Livelihood outcomes

Livelihood outcomes may be positive or negative. Potential outcomes include conventional indicators such as income, food security, and sustainable use of natural resources. Outcomes can also include a strengthened asset base, reduced vulnerability, and improvements in other aspects of well-being such as health, self-esteem, sense of control, and even maintenance of cultural assets, and thus have a feedback effect on the vulnerability status and asset base. Nevertheless, all livelihood strategies may not give positive results because some internal or external factors may affect the livelihood strategies adopted. A practical experience in chapter five will illustrate this point.

Moreover, livelihood strategies and outcomes are not just dependent on access to capital assets or constrained by the vulnerability context; they are also transformed by the environment of structures and processes. Lipton (1991) mentions that "structures are the public and private sector organizations that set and implement policy and legislation, deliver services; and purchase, trade, and perform all manner of other functions that affect livelihoods" (Lipton, 1991:14)

2.2.2.4 Sustainable Livelihoods applied to women's empowerment

The shift towards a Sustainable Livelihoods approach begins with an examination and adjustment of the grounding philosophy of the approach. The concepts of “livelihoods” and “sustainability” create new goals in economic development work by broadening the livelihood strategies. Sustainable Livelihoods is an anti-poverty approach. Its philosophy is women-centred, empowering, activist, and committed to long-term results. ‘Women-centred’ means that the Sustainable Livelihoods approach requires to place women (and the poor in general) in context of vulnerability first, and get to know women as complete people, rather than compartmentalizing the work with women. It encourages to build positively upon women’s assets, resources, aptitudes, abilities, skills and knowledge, rather than emphasize deficits (Carney, 1998:55).

Women are actively involved in a process of developing knowledge and organizing so that they become self-directing: they can set their goals, assess their options, trust in their own achievements and take responsibility for their futures. Davies, Rick and Lasse Krantz (1999) indicate that it is also activist on two levels: “by exploring what makes women vulnerable at the macro-level and by assessing their assets at the micro-level, Sustainable Livelihoods offers practitioners a dual approach to dealing with women’s poverty” (Davies, Rick and Lasse Krantz , 1999). Because it emphasizes the context that perpetuates poverty and dependency, it encourages practitioners to promote social and economic change at this broader level, in addition to offering practical program techniques to build women’s livelihoods (ibid.)

SLF is also committed to long-term results, by definition; the SL approach seeks lasting results, acknowledging the complex and long-term nature of anti-poverty work. Identifying the five asset areas vital to a woman’s successful transition out of poverty - human, financial, social, personal and physical – it provides a more comprehensive and detailed picture of the outcomes of community-based development work than a simple focus on employment and increased income levels. Sustainable Livelihoods also requires participants to define their own success. Thus, women themselves can say what they expect to achieve, so that more realistic expectations can be incorporated into the plans of all governmental and non-governmental organisations working in the field of women’s empowerment.

Hence, women are assisted by the above organisations in building a business context, which means that the process of developing a successful business offers participants an opportunity to leverage the development of a wide range of assets (Davies, Rick and Lasse Krantz, 1999: *ibid.*). Business development involves the discipline of survival: the women become responsible for the success or failure of the business that they have started. So it is imperative that NGOs and GOs support independent business decision-making by women, offering high quality, professional business information, problem solving advice and technical assistance.

In other words, these organizations have become activists and catalysts of change in many rural areas. Thus, working with women in the long-term, the organisations will see the range of economic, social and policy factors that can undermine women's livelihood strategies and make them vulnerable. Keeping women's issues at the fore, they must support them to build a vision and a foundation for change. The Sustainable Livelihoods approach provides an asset-based framework for women to look at their lives and build on existing strengths in each area in a holistic manner.

The Sustainable Livelihoods approach is built upon the active participation of the women a program is targeting. Participation and empowerment are directly connected and build on each other, enabling women to gain more control over their lives and to play a more active roles as citizens. Active participation in a program is difficult to achieve, and requires organizations to affirm their respect for participants and their commitment to invest in participation. Yet development practitioners can incorporate active participation into the design, decision-making, implementation, learning and evaluation stages of the program. Ownership of decision making within programs is often the first ownership these women have experienced in a long time, and marks a new shift in their thinking (Murray and Ferguson, 2001: *ibid.*).

2.2.2.5 The strengths and weaknesses of SLF

(i) Strengths

By drawing attention to the multiplicity of assets that people make use of when constructing their livelihoods, the SL Approach produces a more holistic view on what resources, or combination of resources, are important to the poor, including not only physical and natural

resources, but also their social and human capital. The approach also facilitates an understanding of the underlying causes of poverty by focusing on the variety of factors, at different levels, that directly or indirectly determine or constrain poor people's access to resources/assets of different kinds, and thus their livelihoods. Additionally, it provides a more realistic framework for assessing the direct and indirect effects on people's living conditions than, for example, one dimensional productivity or income criteria (UNDP, 1997a).

Moreover, the sustainable livelihoods approach is an integrated development method, which brings individual approaches together to achieve sustainable development. It involves an assessment of community assets, adaptive strategies and technologies contributing to livelihood systems, and the analysis of cross - sectoral policies and investment requirements to enhance livelihoods. This approach acknowledges that communities are both subjects and objects of change and that they have much strength and much knowledge about their own situation. It puts strong emphasis on the question of sustainability in economics, environmental and social well-being of people, governance and policy as well as their linkages. It uses empowerment rather than welfare, improves the productivity of existing livelihood systems and creates new opportunities sustainably. As part of the empowerment of a community, the sustainable livelihoods approach allows for the development of indicators to measure improvements in livelihood systems and the sustainability of these systems (Van Dillen, 2002: 248-252)

(ii) Some weaknesses

First of all, SLF (together with other sustainable livelihood approaches) doesn't make clear on how to identify the poor that SLF is trying to assist. Also, the way resources and other livelihood opportunities are distributed locally is often influenced by informal structures of social dominance and power within the communities themselves (Ellis, 2000: 27). Another weakness is that there is no mention of gender in the published frameworks except for Ellis (2000) who lists gender, class, age and ethnicity under 'social relations' (Ellis, 2000).

Gender is an aspect of social relations and to the extent that relations between men and women are characterized by marked inequality and social domination, they obviously form part of the problem. SL approaches give consideration to gender in a broad way, and talk about the poor in generally, but do not highlight how poverty is more experienced by women

than men. The basic idea of the SL approach is to start with a broad and open-ended analysis, but this requires a highly flexible planning situation which rarely exists. The best hope is to ensure that already identified/decided sector development initiatives fit with people's livelihood strategies and make them better at responding to the constraints and opportunities affecting the poor. The SL approach, or elements of it, could usefully be employed to that end.

Moreover, the SL approach, if applied consistently, might be beyond the practical realities of many local development administrations, with the risk that this approach remains an initiative of donors and their consultants. One measure to counteract this would be to ensure that counterpart staff are involved from the beginning when discussing how and if such a strategy should be applied, and to train them to use the approach, and/or start with a simplified version of the approach (Chambers, 1987: 57)

The SL approach is designed to work across sectors. However, in reality, most government institutions and organizations are operated and funded on a sector basis and thus cross sector development is difficult (Carney, 1999a). In fact, the nature of poverty is different according to the context, and in most cases influenced by culture and traditional factors. In the early DFID framework, culture is considered as part of the vulnerability context. Culture is regarded in the later DFID framework as a process, along with laws, policies and institutions. Ellis (2000) identifies 'rules, customs and land tenure' as institutional aspects that could modify access to resources (Ellis 2000: 30). A SLF has the potential to incorporate cultural aspects. However, the frameworks dealing with livelihood issues reviewed so far do not provide researchers and practitioners with clear guidance on the way in which tradition and culture can be incorporated into the livelihood system (Cahn, 2002: www.devnet.org.nz/conf2002/). Additionally, SLF doesn't disaggregate the poor; thus, take the poor as a homogenous group. Nevertheless, the poor are not the same and poverty has different roots and different approach of solutions from one person to another. But there is another weakness in SLF, and that is its local focus. This implies that change can come from local level and overcome bigger 'structural' constraints, such as the position of Rwanda in the global economy, 'structural adjustment' policies etc.

2.2.2.6 Asset Based Community Development (ABCD)

Like SLF, ABCD places a similar emphasis on building an asset base in households and communities that is transferable across generations. Recognizing that many such assets already exist to some degree in the community, the emphasis is on promoting opportunities for building assets and eliminating structures that limit such opportunities. Based on extensive inquiry into the characteristics of successful community initiatives in the U.S., John McKnight and Jody Kretzmann at the Institute for Policy Research (IPR) at Northwestern University, articulated ABCD as a way of counteracting the predominant needs-based approach to development in urban America (Kretzmann and McKnight, 1994: 6). In the needs-based approach, well-intentioned efforts of universities, donor agencies and governments, have generated needs surveys, analyzed problems, and identified solutions to meet those needs. In the process, however, they have inadvertently presented a one-sided negative view which has often compromised, rather than contributed to, community capacity building.

Kretzmann and McKnight (1994) point out that if the needs-based approach is the only guide to poor communities, the consequences can be "devastating" (Kretzmann and McKnight, 1993: 4). One of the main effects is leadership that denigrates the community. Leaders find that the best way to attract institutional resources is to play up the severity of problems. Local leadership is judged on how many resources are attracted to the community, not on how self-reliant the community has become. Another consequence Kretzmann and McKnight point out is that people in the communities start to believe what their leaders are saying. They begin to see themselves as deficient and incapable of taking charge of their lives and of the community. Not surprisingly, community members no longer act like citizens; instead they begin to act like "clients" or consumers of services with no incentive to be producers (Kretzmann and McKnight, 1994: 10).

Yet another consequence is that local groups begin to deal more with external institutions than with groups in their own community. This reinforces the notion that "only outside experts can provide real help" (Kretzmann and McKnight, 1994: 4) and further weakens neighbour-to-neighbour links. Funding is made available on the basis of categories of needs rather than for integrated approaches which leads to "the much lamented fragmentation of efforts to provide solutions...This denies the basic community wisdom which regards problems as tightly intertwined, as symptoms in fact of the breakdown of the community's

own problem solving capacities" (Kretzmann and McKnight, 1994: 4). To make matters worse, the bulk of any funding tends to go to the institutions filling the needs. Perversely, these institutions begin to develop a vested interest in maintaining this approach.

In "*Building Communities from the Inside Out*", Kretzmann and McKnight (1994) describe an alternative approach, one that recognizes that it is the capacities of local people and their associations that build powerful communities. The process of recognizing these capacities begins with the construction of a new lens through which communities can "begin to assemble their strengths into new combinations, new structures of opportunity, new sources of income and control, and new possibilities for production" (Kretzmann and McKnight, 1994: 6). Experience in the U.S. shows how several communities have mobilized to take action for their economic and social development. Nevertheless, sometimes, this ABCD approach has evolved over a long period of time.

For example, in Savannah, Georgia, neighborhood redevelopment had been going on for more than 25 years, initially through municipal agencies responding to problems identified in local neighborhoods. Over time, however, municipal agencies decided to "lead by stepping back"; communities shifted from being "consumers" of services to "designers" of community programs, and, finally "producers" of community (Kretzmann and McKnight, 1999: 43). In view of this, decision was taken to encourage communities to take charge with confidence in their own capacities and communities were helped to build an inventory of their assets and encouraged to see value in resources that would otherwise have been ignored, unrealized, or dismissed.

Such unrealized resources include not only personal attributes and skills, but also the relationships among people through social, kinship, or associational networks. By mobilizing these informal networks, formal institutional resources can be activated -such as local government, formal community-based organizations, and private enterprise. In fact, the key to ABCD is the power of local associations to drive the community development process and to leverage additional support and entitlements. These associations are the vehicles through which all the community's assets can be identified and then connected to one another in ways that multiply their power and effectiveness.

As an approach to community-based development, ABCD rests on the principle that the recognition of strengths, gifts, talents and assets of individuals and communities is more likely to inspire positive action for change than an exclusive focus on needs and problems. Cahn (2002) argues that “seeing the glass half-full as well as half empty is not to deny the real problems that a community faces, but to focus energy on how each and every member has contributed, and can continue to contribute, in meaningful ways to community development” (Cahn, *ibid.*). Greene (2000) mentions that, “as engines of community action, and as a source of power and leadership, associations of community members (both formal and informal) are considered assets of the community” (Greene, 2000: 52). However, beyond the mobilization of a particular community, ABCD is concerned with how to link micro-assets to the macro environment. Hence, there is attention paid to the boundaries of community and how to position the community in relation to local institutions and the external economic environment on which its continued prosperity depends. Hence, this potentially overcomes the limitations of the SLF which focus solely on the local and ignore the position of the community within the external economic and political environment.

Kretzmann and McKnight (1993) list the methods through which ABCD is facilitated by different NGOs : “Collecting stories, organising a core group, mapping the capacities and assets of individuals, associations and local institutions, building a community vision and plan, mobilizing and linking assets for economic development, leveraging activities, investments and resources from outside the community” (Kretzmann and McKnight, 1994:35). Taking only the example of the first stage (collecting stories), to begin building confidence in the community, informal discussions and interviews that draw out people's experience of successful activities and projects help to uncover the gifts, skills, talents and assets people have. Not only does this uncover assets that people have not recognised before, but it also strengthens people's pride in their achievements. This celebration of achievement and realisation of what they have to contribute builds confidence in their abilities to be producers, not recipients, of development.

2.2.2.7 Dialogical action

Throughout the history of women and development, experience showed that failing to engage women in projects aiming at their own empowerment, made these projects fail, especially due to autocratic and anti-dialogical approach of development applied by some funders. Freire

(2000) makes it clear that “leaders who do not act dialogically, but insist on imposing their decisions, do not organize the people--they manipulate them. They do not liberate, nor are they liberated: they oppress” (Freire, 2000: 70). In the transition from gender discrimination to gender equality and women’s empowerment, Paulo Freire inspires both policy-makers and development planners with the importance of dialogue with people. Freire indicates that “it cannot fear the people, their expression, their effective participation in power...” (Freire, 2000: 47). In fact, the top-down system, or in Freire’s words: “manipulation, sloganising, depositing, regimentation...cannot be components of revolutionary praxis, precisely because they are components of the praxis of domination. In order to dominate, the dominator has no choice but to deny true praxis to the people, deny them the right to say their own word and think their own thoughts....” (Freire, 2000:49)

Built on a belief that citizens can be trusted to shape their own future, dialogue between development planners and development beneficiaries can use local decision making and capacities to steer and define the nature of an intervention. Turning to the issue of women’s empowerment, many funding organisations claim to know what women need for their emancipation and development, even if they do not ask them. This is probably why many ‘women’s projects’ fail to get women out of their vulnerability context, as mentioned earlier. To illustrate this, for a doctor to prescribe medicines for a patient, he/she talks to the patient and the doctor makes sure that he/she understands well the nature and possible root of the illness. In the process, the doctor can neither impose medicine nor claim to know the problem of the patient before he has engaged in a dialogue with the patient. That is how policy-makers, development planners and beneficiaries of development are supposed to behave, if real and sustainable development is to happen.

However, dialogue is more than talking. It is not the straightforwardness of talking to or at, rather it is communicating with or between. It is “a relation between persons that is characterised in more or less degree by the element of inclusion” (Friedman, 2002). Inclusiveness is an acknowledgment of the other person, an event experienced between two persons, mutual respect for both views and a willingness to listen to the views of the other. These elements are the heart of dialogical relations (Friedman, 2002: 243-264).

This research made a conscious choice to use “dialogical action theory”, given the reality that for real women’s empowerment, funding organisations and stakeholders or women’s

cooperatives who engage in dialogue in the process of development experience ‘the other’ as a person like themselves. Most often, an objectified relationship happens when there is a routine transaction or when the other person in the conversation is being used and is instrumental for some means. Taking the example of Shyogwe diocese, where the researcher has been working in the department of projects for 8 years, a faith-based NGO in 1997 gave the department 56 goats to distribute to widows as a way of helping them to generate income. The NGO did not ask our choice as the development department, and in turn, we did not ask the widows if they agree with the idea of providing goats. There was unfortunately no dialogue between the department, the NGO and the widows. About six months later, most widows had sold their goats to buy pigs. When we challenged them about that shift, they showed us how they benefited more from replacing goats with pigs. Indeed, after having learned lessons the hard way in this case, we stated that dialogue was necessary between first the department and the widows, and then, between the department and the NGO.

In view of the above, the “dialogical action” theory of Freire in the context of women’s empowerment is very close to the practice of participatory development. This means that in the process of women’s empowerment, women need to be involved in the process and in the creation, content and conduct of a program or policy designed to change their lives. Built on a belief that citizens can be trusted to shape their own future, participatory development and “dialogical approach “ use local decision making and capacities to steer and define the nature of an intervention. However, participation as process or formality does not mean change in structural relations. Herbert claims for example that “our society has opted for more humanistic and democratic values; however unfulfilled they may be in practice” (Balls, 1974: 5-16). In fact, due to centralization of city bureaucracy, rural communities often cannot fully participate in development and democracy. Indeed, in a participatory democracy, decision-making is the process whereby people propose, discuss, decide, plan and implement those decisions that affect their lives. This requires that decision-making processes be set up in a functional manner; so that the constituencies significantly affected by decisions are the ones that make them...participatory democracy assumes that a good society cannot be good unless that happens. Thus, participation and control must be one (Bennello & Roussopolous, 1979:19).

In the process of women’s empowerment, participation and dialogic communication are effective because, although there can be some agreements and disagreements, a consensus is

possible on what real empowerment and emancipation should be. This strategy of emphasis on community generally and women specifically, gives new hope to society. The results of dialogue are respect and understanding of differing views. As will be seen in chapter seven, a cooperative is good place to achieve that task. The fieldwork in Mayaga region shows how women and men meet in cooperatives and cooperate with the same voice and opportunity. What they plan and have to achieve in cooperatives is agreed upon, in a dialogical and participative manner, and women gain power through that dialogue with men. In the fieldwork, the ways in which cooperatives can be vehicles for dialogic communication are explored.

Apart from bureaucracy, culture is another constraint to participation and dialogue. The Rwandan proverbs “uruvuze umugore ruvuga umuhoro” (“the word of a woman is followed by machete”) or “nta nkokokazi ibika isake ihari” (“a hen cannot cluck when a cock is around”), show how women lived in an anti-dialogical society in Rwanda. When they talk, something bad may follow. This traditional thinking in rural areas of Mayaga was breached through the work of cooperatives, where women can now offer their own critical thinking on how cooperatives can improve their work. In this study, the researcher is going to explore how cooperatives changed the culture of participation and dialogue.

2.2.3 Conclusion

Chapter two discussed the theoretical and methodological framework of this study. For the theoretical framework, we have seen that by using the term ‘gender’, we are using a shorthand term which encodes a very crucial point; that our basic social identities as men and women are socially constructed rather than based on fixed biological characteristics. It was highlighted that stereotypes about sex differences in strength have affected not only women’s participation in various physical activities, but also the kinds of exercise and job thought suitable to them. Gender inequality as demonstrated by statistics shown in this chapter is viewed not only as a development issue, but also a human rights issue. In this chapter, some factors fuelling gender discrimination were mentioned, such as patriarchy, culture and Christian beliefs. Feminists and development theories were also explored. On the one hand, we have summarised some feminist theories such as liberal, radical and Marxist feminism, and feminism in the African context. In spite of some differences between these theories, we found that they have a same goal which is the liberation of women, and all of these theories

encompass epistemologies, methodologies, theories, and modes of activism that seek to bring an end to the oppression and subordination of women by men.

This chapter discussed the Beijing Platform of Action (BPoA) and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), with focus on goal 3 (MDG 3). We have seen that the declarations and agreements made during BPoA and MDGs and MDG 3 are not implemented successfully in many countries; on the one side due to lack of economic means to implement them; and on the other side due to the political unwillingness of some.

For the methodological framework, chapter two discussed three frameworks: Sustainable Livelihoods Framework (SLF), Asset- Based Community Development (ABCD) and the dialogical action theory of Freire Paulo. The overall framework adopted in analysing the findings is SLF, with the other frameworks considered supplemental tools of analysis. We have seen that both SLF and ABCD put people at the centre of development, thereby increasing the effectiveness of development assistance and decreasing the vulnerability context of poor people. We have seen that SLF shows how, in different contexts, women and the poor in general can achieve sustainable livelihoods through access to a range of livelihood resources (natural, financial, human and social capital) which are combined in the pursuit of different livelihood strategies. However, it was highlighted that individual women from the cooperatives and households are embedded in a specific context made up of exposure to risks and opportunities on the one hand, and to services and policies, institutions, organizations, processes and structures on the other hand. Indeed, these influence the way in which women or their households can use a combination of assets to develop a particular livelihood activity or coping strategy.

This chapter discussed how ABCD is a methodology that seeks to uncover and highlight the strengths within communities as a means for sustainable development, and this methodology can be a good model that community development projects can use, given the fact that the basic tenet is that a capacities-focused approach is more likely to empower the community and therefore mobilize citizens to create positive and meaningful change from within. In view of this, instead of focusing on a community's needs, deficiencies and problems, the ABCD approach can help women involved in cooperatives to become stronger and more self-reliant by discovering, mapping and mobilizing all their local assets to sustain their livelihoods.

Finally, this chapter discussed the theory of “dialogical action” indicating that in dialogical action, the central theme is dialogue, which deals with power relations and empowering the powerless. If we apply this to development, this means that in the development process, all stakeholders should take part in decision making through engaging in a dialogue on the content and conduct of a program or policy designed to change their lives. In other words, built on a belief that citizens can be trusted to shape their own future, dialogue between development planners and development beneficiaries can use local decision making and capacities to steer and define the nature of an intervention.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH DESIGN

3.1 Introduction

With a general understanding of the intent and rationale for conducting a research study, the researcher designs a study and formats it following the traditional research approach: presenting a problem, asking a question, collecting the data, analyzing the data and answering the question (Creswell, 1998:18). In this research, the phenomenon to be investigated is the process of women's empowerment in post-1994 Rwanda, and its impact on the livelihoods of women working in cooperatives in Mayaga region.

According to the Research Council of Nipissing University (2008), "research is any original and systematic investigation undertaken in order to increase knowledge and understanding and to establish facts and principles. It is comprises of the creation of ideas and generation of knowledge that leads to new and substantially improved insights and/or the development of new materials, devices, products and processes" (Definition of research, 2008: www.nipissingu.ca/research/downloads). In applied fields of study, the Research Council (2008) defines research as a process of creating new and unique knowledge specific to an applied field of study. It takes the form of systematic investigation into the phenomena of concern to the field of study using a range of quantitative and qualitative approaches, the results of which add to, confirm, or reject what is already known (Definition of research, 2008: *ibid*).

This research is mainly qualitative, explorative and descriptive, and is to a limited extent quantitative. Firstly, qualitative research refers to an inquiry that explores social or human problems and the understanding of how things occur (Creswell, 1998: 162). It enables the researcher to build a complex and holistic picture through the analysis of words, to report specific views of the informants and to conduct the study in a natural setting. According to Burns and Grove (1999:338), qualitative research is a systematic, subjective approach to describe life experiences and give them meaning. A qualitative design will enable the researcher to reveal the complexities of the livelihoods of women working in cooperatives in Mayaga region.

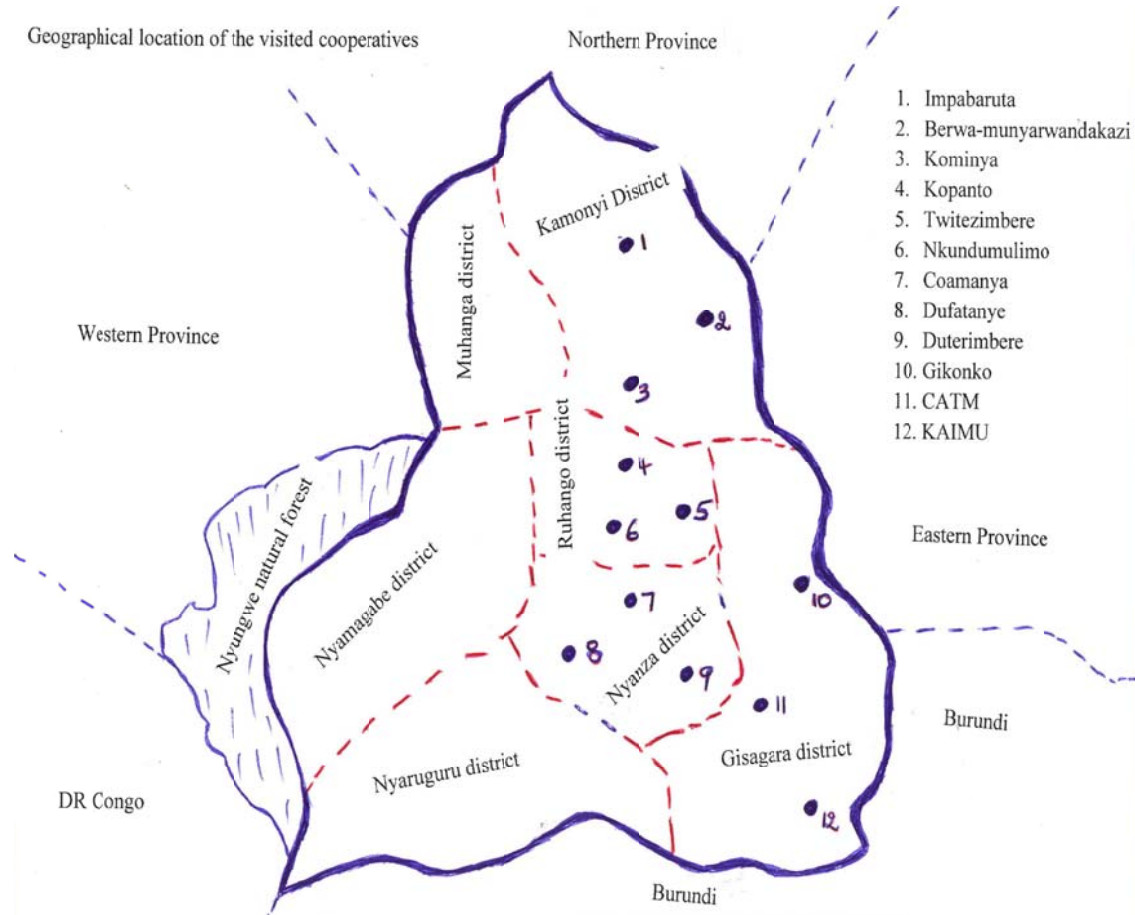
Secondarily, this research is exploratory research as it tries to uncover relationships and dimensions of a phenomenon by investigating the manner in which the phenomenon manifests itself (Wilson, 1993: 136). Grinnell (1993) maintains that the definition of exploratory research is that in its nature it explores the research question about which little is yet known in order to uncover generalisations, which means that researcher departs from a point of reference of “not knowing” (Grinnell, 1993: 136). Thirdly, it is descriptive because its design refers to the accurate portrayal of particular individuals or real-life situations, for the purpose of discovering new meaning and describing what exists by categorising the information generated from the study (Creswell, 1994:145). In this study, women working in cooperatives in Mayaga region will be described so that complete and accurate information can be obtained. To a limited extent, this research is quantitative as some statistics are used to measure the achievement of women in different fields. This combination of methods is defended by Mouton (1996) in what is called “multiple operationalisms” (Mouton, 1996: 37), or triangulation (Miles and Huberman, 1994: 51).

3.2 The context of the research

The fieldwork was undertaken at a moment when Rwanda has adopted a process of women’s empowerment as the cornerstone of poverty reduction and sustainable development. In fact, it was undertaken at a time when increasingly opportunities are being accorded to women through, for example, the introduction of new inheritance rights and the inclusion of women in politics and civil society, from the grassroots to the national levels, at a rate of at least 30%. Two tranches of fieldwork (23 February- 31 March 2009 and 16 November – 10 December 2009) were conducted in Rwanda and covered the Mayaga region, formerly made up of six districts: Mugina, Ntongwe, Muyira, Ntyazo, Mugusa, and Muyaga. Due to the 2006 administrative reform in Rwanda, the boundaries of the districts were re-traced, and the six districts were split up into four new ones: Kamonyi, Ruhango, Nyanza and Gisagara. The new districts constituting Mayaga region are part of the Southern Province of Rwanda which is also new and formed by the former provinces of Gitarama, Butare and Gikongoro. On this map the Mayaga region is indicated by the Eastern districts of Kamonyi, Ruhango, Nyanza and Gisagara. For more details, see map 1.

More details on the visited cooperatives and their geography location are found in map 2.

Map 1: Geographical location of cooperatives in Mayaga region



The fieldwork was aimed at visiting cooperatives, looking at the extent to which they involve women and examining how cooperatives economically empower women and the society as a whole. Between 1994 and 2007, the term used was “association” and an association could be exclusively constituted by widows, orphans, HIV positive individuals, etc. From 2007, income-generating associations were renamed cooperatives. Now, ‘association’ is applied to non-profit organisations, such as human rights organizations. Since the adoption of the new legislation on cooperatives, a cooperative can include a variety of people, as long as they accept to be bound by the cooperative’s rules, including the payment of membership dues, attending meetings and participating in daily activities. Table 3 (on next page) gives information on the profile of the study participants.

	WO	ME	TO	MA	DV	WD	20 to 35	35 to 45	45 to 60	60 to 70	ILL .	PRS.	PST- PRS.	SEC S	
KOPANTO - RUHANGO	82	1	83	27	10	45	37	28	15	2	15	53	12	2	23-24 Feb.09
NKUNDUMULI MO- RUHANGO	48	14	62	20	5	22	19	25	12	2	9	32	6	1	25-26 Feb. 09
TWITEZIMBER- E-RUHANGO	116	54	170	66	13	37	21	60	29	6	21	70	16	9	27-28 Feb. 09
KAIMU (GISAGARA)	491	153	664	251	27	213	65	216	201	9	43	398	46	4	9-10 March 09
CATM- GISAGARA	435	96	531	221	20	194	73	235	92	35	39	358	35	3	11-12 March 09
GIKONKO- GISAGARA	126	52	178	52	17	57	21	55	46	4	19	88	15	4	13 -14 March 09
COAMANYA- NYANZA D	76	15	92	32	6	38	15	41	17	3	5	52	12	7	18-19 March 09
DUTERIMBERE - NYANZA	884	156	104 0	472	19	393	68	382	436	8	34	758	69	23	20-21 March 09
DUFATANYE- NYANZA D	56	10	66	24	4	27	12	31	10	3	2	43	10	1	23-24 March 09
IMPABARUTA- KAMONYI	1568	622	219 0	746	26	796	114	974	473	7	85	1423	45	15	26-27 March 09
KOMINYA- KAMONYI	1558	265	180 1	733	44	781	98	971	463	26	75	1413	35	5	28 March 09

BERWAMUNY-KAMONYI	194	6	200	83	16	95	42	56	68	28	23	116	45	10	30-31 March 09
TOTAL	4132	145 4	558 6	269 5	207	2698	585	307 4	186 2	13 3	44 5	3381	346	84	
Percentage	74%	26 %		65 %	5%	65%	14%	74 %	45 %	3%	11 %	82%	8%	2%	

Some words in the table are shortened as follows:

WO: Women ME: Members TO: Total MA: Married DV: Divorced
 WD: Widows ILL.: Illiterate PRS.: Primary school PST-PRS.: Post-primary school.
 SECS.: Secondary school D: District

Three cooperatives were selected from each district of Mayaga region to make the 12 cooperatives that served as the sample in this research. Cooperatives were selected from those that have finished the process of registration both with the local government authorities and with the Task Force on Cooperatives in Rwanda. There are approximately 45 registered cooperatives in the region out of a total of 85 cooperatives. Of these 45 cooperatives, almost all are agricultural production cooperatives. In selecting these twelve cooperatives, in addition to the geographic distribution of the cooperatives (three in each of the four districts, see map 2 above), the researcher looked at the diversity of the activities. These 12 cooperatives were selected on the basis of their success to involve women in cooperatives and the success of cooperatives in Mayaga region.

The background of the region was so important in the selection process because Mayaga region has always been identified as a traditional society, and by extension, a society where gender-based violence was high. So the way the region turned in involving the highest number of women in cooperatives was so relevant for this research. The sample of 12 cooperatives is understood to be representative of cooperatives in the region.

Even though everyone is welcomed in cooperatives, they are still predominantly made up of women (see the above table), for various reasons. Women are in the majority in rural areas, and they are the first to see the utility of cooperatives due to their vulnerability situation as explained in-depth in chapter five. Despite the fact that cooperatives are mixed, this research focuses only on women as the area of study is women's empowerment through cooperatives. Looking at the information in table 5 (p.107-108), one can see that the 12 cooperatives targeted as the sample involves 4132 women (74%) and 1454 men (26%).

3.3 Data Collection

Data was collected through two primary data collection methods: focus groups and individual interviews. Utilization of more than one method of collecting data is supported by Clarke (1999: 67) when he states that it is rare to find a qualitative study based on one method of data collection. Semi-structured interviews were used both in the focus groups and the individual interviews, which were conducted with individuals and representatives of organizations (NGOs & GOs) responsible for facilitating the implementation of women's cooperatives. The interview was chosen as "it represents a valid source of knowledge production" (Alvesson, 2002:111). Secondary data sources in the form of monthly and annual reports of the programmes provided written information which was used to verify accuracy of data collected through interviews. As Chambers points out, bigotry is to be overcome when collecting information to avoid bias, or prejudice that "impedes our understanding of new circumstances" (Chambers, in Vainio-Mattila, 1999: 13). The focus groups interviews were conducted in the open-air at the cooperative's physical place of production. Three cooperatives borrowed a meeting room from the district. The responses of the women participants, both in focus groups and individuals, were handwritten in a notebook, because recording was not agreed upon. Finally, the researcher's direct observation of cooperatives activities during visits to the cooperatives was another method of data collection.

Key informants interviews were organized individually. Key informants were NGO representatives and local government representatives who are technically or financially involved in the activities of the cooperatives. The researcher interviewed both the gender desk officers and the cooperatives department coordinators in the districts as key informants. The researcher selected one informant for each category. In addition to that, two local government (Ruhango district and Gisagara district) were interviewed as they were available.

These key informants were people who have personal knowledge or experience with the cooperatives and gender issues generally, and people with a professional training in that area. From the observation of the researcher, the informants interviewed were people from different ages, ethnicities and educational levels, but all could express themselves clearly.

3.4 Focus Group Survey

Powell et al (1996) define a focus group as “a group of individuals selected and assembled by researchers to discuss and comment on, from personal experience, the topic that is the subject of the research” (Powel et al, 1996: 499). In addition, Morgan (1997) shows that focus groups are a form of group interviewing, but it is important to distinguish between the two (focus groups and group interviews). Eight questions were asked during the interviews (see appendix 1, ii). Some groups of interviewees were big and then were divided into two or three focus groups (table 5), in order to facilitate the communication and participation of all the respondents.

Cooperatives' members were not given directions or instructions on how to select their representatives, but were advised to make a focus-group constituted by 15-18 people. In fact, from the researcher's experience in previous interviews, a maximum of 18 interviewees in one focus-group is reasonable for good communication and participations. Additionally, together with the representatives of the cooperatives, cooperatives were divided into three categories. These categories depend on the number of members, meaning that the third category are the biggest cooperatives, the second category are the medium sized ones, and the first category is constituted by small cooperatives. The researcher agreed with the cooperatives' representatives to take one focus group for each of the first category cooperatives, two focus groups for each of the second, and three focus groups for each of the third category of cooperatives. However, some cooperatives chose to be represented by their elected committees. For a cooperative represented by two focus groups, they will be quoted as Focus group A and B) and for a cooperative represented by three focus groups; they will be quoted as focus group A, B, and D. More details on the constitution of the focus group, see table 5 below.

In addition to the focus groups and the individual interviews, another method of getting information was used by the researcher consisting of visiting the committees of the

cooperatives and asking a permission to access their term or annually reports. This method allowed the researcher to watch what cooperatives members do rather than totally relying on what they tell him. During the process, the researcher was more likely to observe the work process, the division of labour, the outputs and the problems faced. The researcher could get some information of how cooperatives members get their work done in context, and this method allows for observing subtleties of work. It is in this way that the researcher discovered that all the committees have books with some statistics on the situation of educations of the children among cooperatives' members, the situation of health insurance, nutrition and malnutrition, and other statistics, as found in most of the tables in the research. However, this method can be a significant time commitment, particularly if you observe for extended periods of time. Another problem is that it can be challenging to know what to pay attention to if a lot is going on.

Table 5: Focus-group interviews

Cooperatives District	Members			The Focus group		
	Women	Men	Total	Women	Men	Total
<u>KOPANTO</u> (RUHANGO D.)	82	1	83	15	0	15
<u>2.NKUNDUMULIMO</u> (RUHANGO D.)	48	14	62	15	2	17
<u>3. TWITEZIMBERE</u> (RUHANGO D.)	116	54	170	15	3	18
<u>4. KAIMU</u> (GISAGARA D.)	491	153	664	15	2	17
<u>5. CATM</u> (GISAGARA D.)	435	96	531	15	0	15
<u>6. GIKONKO</u> (GISAGARA D.)	126	52	178	15	3	18
<u>7. COAMANYA</u>						

(NYANZA D.)	76	15	92	15	1	16
8. <u>DUTERIMBERE</u> (NYANZA D.)	884	156	1040	15	2	17
				13	3	16
9. <u>DUFATANYE</u> (NYANZA D.)	56	10	66	15	1	16
10. <u>IMPABARUTA</u> (KAMONYI D.)	1568	622	2190	15	2	17
				14	2	16
				15	1	16
11. <u>KOMINYA</u> (KAMONYI D.)	1558	265	1801	14	2	16
				15	1	16
				15	2	17
12. <u>BERWA- MUNYA</u> (KAMONYI D.)	194	6	200	15	2	17
Percentage	74%	26%	100%	93,35%	6,65%	100%

While this study was focusing on women's empowerment, and hence women are the primary subjects of the research, the reality is that cooperatives are constituted by both men (26%) and women (74%). Hence, the cooperatives' representatives decided with the researcher to allow volunteer men to feel free to participate in the interviews, but their participation being limited to giving ideas on some specific questions - such as the issue of gender and culture, gender and patriarchy, and so forth. However, as table 13 shows, very few men were interested. The participation of women in the focus groups was far higher than the participation of men as table 5 shows. In an interview with a gender desk officer in Nyanza district, it was indicated that this approach of women including men is common to all the surveys conducted with cooperatives, and helps to avoid the suspicions of men towards women, and to reinforce the mutual trust in the cooperatives.

The method of compiling responses from the 21 focus groups below consisted of; (1) taking all the responses from one focus-group on one question and putting them together; (2) summarizing the responses of one focus-group one every question, and make it for all the 21 focus- groups. In total, 21 focus groups (totaling 200 people) were interviewed. The eight questions asked during the focus groups, were the questions connected to the tools of the analysis of the findings - SLF and ABCD. The aim was to assess and measure women's vulnerability, their assets, their livelihoods, changes in household nutrition etc as indicators of improved livelihoods.

The committees of cooperatives make a regular record of the activities and the situation of the members in their households. They try to quantify different cases like children who left school, who suffer from malnutrition...and the committees record the progress for each case. It is by accessing this information that the researcher made most of the tables found in this research.

Babbie (2007) states that there are several major benefits of the focus group, mainly:

- In the focus group method, there is less intrusion on those being interviewed as the semi-structured interview encourages interactions between the interviewer and the interviewees. This system of interview refers to the 'dialogical action' mentioned in the previous chapter, a theory that suggests that a dialogical communication is a major factor of reaching an agreement and a consensus – as dialoguers or communicators exchange views in interactive way; with humility and respect of the dignity of one another. Indeed, the main advantage of a focus group is that the members of the group respond to each other.
- Those being interviewed can ask questions of the interviewer. In this way it can also function as an extension tool. (and is 'dialogical' rather than a 'one-way' process of 'extracting information')
- Using both individual and group interviews can optimize the strengths of both (Babbie, 2007: 12).

Apart from the above advantages, Barbour and Kitzinger (1999) show that, compared to observation or individual interviews, a focus group enables the researcher to gain a larger amount of information in a shorter period of time (Barbour and Kitzinger, 1999: 93).

As shown above, the method of data collection used, both with focus groups and with individuals, was semi-structured interviews, a well-known method of research used in the social sciences. While a structured interview has formalized, limited sets of questions, a semi-structured interview is flexible, allowing new questions to be brought up during the interview as a result of what the interviewee says. The interviewees or respondents in the semi-structured interviews were given a framework of themes on gender and women's empowerment to be explored. The researcher facilitated the exploration of each theme by members of the focus group through a discussion of the broad questions set mentioned in the appendix 2 (ii).

This technique of collecting was appreciated both by the researcher and the respondents. The views of the respondents on question eight showed their satisfaction of the system of data collection because it created an environment that allowed members of women's cooperatives the time and scope to talk about their opinions on that particular subject (the livelihood challenges faced by women in Mayaga region and livelihood strategies adopted by both the government of Rwanda and the civil society and women themselves). In addition, it was appreciated as being a democratic and non-coercive process, as those who did not feel comfortable in focus groups could fill in a questionnaire. As a matter of fact, two members of one of the cooperatives who were selected to participate in the study preferred to use a questionnaire and the researcher respected that suggestion. These two individuals were given the questionnaire to fill in and after finishing, the researcher collected the questionnaires personally.

The researcher informed participants that they were entitled to a summary of the outcome of the interviews. In view of this, a second tranche of fieldwork was organized and respondents were shown a report of their discussions or interviews so they may check if the report contains all their views, or if they were misunderstood or misinterpreted. In fact, it is understood that "seemingly mundane choices of what to include and exclude and how to arrange the text have serious implications on how a reader will understand the narrative" (Reissman in Huberman and Miles, 2002: 225). This method of a second tranche helped the

researcher in different ways: (1) the researcher got a chance to ask for clarifications on some points that were not clear during the writing of the fieldwork report; (2) as the researcher took the report to the respondents for review; more trust and transparency were built between respondents and the researcher.

3.5 Ethical consideration

As a way of making sure that the researcher's analysis was based on an honest reflection of the beliefs of the respondents, and that the respondents were protected in this research, the researcher's way of working required an adherence to ethical practices. Mouton (2001) highlights that because scientific research is a form of human conduct, it follows that such conduct has to conform to generally accepted norms and values (Mouton, 2001: 238). Research ethics provide the researcher with a code of moral guidelines on how to conduct research in a morally acceptable way. Such guidelines seek to prevent researchers from engaging in scientific misconduct, such as distorting and inventing data, plagiarism, failing to maintain confidentiality and privacy of participants, forcing people to be involved in research and not executing the study properly (Struwig and Stead, 2001: 66).

There were basic ethical considerations to protect the participants from any form of harm that were maintained through this study:

- Informed consent: Each participant was required to sign a consent form. Participants to the study signed a consent form that the researcher handed them prior to beginning the interviews (see appendix 1, i). The consent form told them something about the nature and purpose of the study, what would occur during the interview session, whether any risk was involved, and assured them that all data collected from them would be coded to protect their identity and privacy.
- No deception: Participants were fully informed about the aim of the study, thus avoiding problems of deception or preventing participants from reporting negative feelings about their participation.
- Rights to withdraw (right to self-determination): participants were advised about their right to withdraw from the study, whether before or after the starting of the interviews.

- Debriefing/full disclosure: participants were promised to have access to the results of the study and recommendations emanating from the study
- Confidentiality: Participants were assured of the confidential nature of their participation. Thus, they were given pseudonyms to protect their identities. The use of pseudonyms was the preferred way of working of the respondents. Through this they felt that they could share their opinions without being self-conscious. Although the use of pseudonyms has its limitations, it was agreed upon with the respondents.

3.6 Triangulation

A first general principle in data collection is that the inclusion of multiple sources of data collection in a research project is likely to increase the reliability of the observations. Mouton (1996) suggested a similar strategy called “multiple operationalisms”. Both of these concepts refer to the use of a variety of methods and techniques of data collection in a single study (Mouton, 1996: 156). The underlying assumption is that, because various methods complement each other, their respective shortcomings can be balanced out.

Miles and Huberman (1994) write that using triangulation can make findings more robust (Miles and Huberman, 1994: 51). Indeed, triangulation means combining research methods to give a corroboration of information. It is often beneficial when designing an evaluation to incorporate aspects both of qualitative and quantitative research designs. For example, if you are carrying out a large scale postal survey, you may want to hold focus groups afterwards to gain more insight into the responses provided. For this particular research, although it is a qualitative research, some statistics are needed - for instance, the percentage of women in cooperatives, and their participation in decision-making in their cooperatives and in Rwanda as a whole. These statistics assist in the data analysis.

However; as above mentioned, this research basically uses a qualitative approach. The distinction between quantitative and qualitative data in social research is essentially the distinction between numerical and non-numerical data. For instance, when we say that someone is intelligent, we have made a qualitative judgment. When psychologists and others measure intelligence by IQ (intellectual quotient) scores, they are attempting to quantify such qualitative assessments (Babbie, 2007: 23). Quantification often makes our observations

more explicit. It also can make it easier to aggregate, compare, and summarise data. Further, it opens up the possibility of statistical analysis, ranging from simple averages to complex formulas and mathematical models (Babbie, 2007: 23). Quantitative data, then, offers the advantage that numbers have over words as measures of some quality. In this study, it is important to measure the improvements in the livelihoods of women and their households through their participation in cooperatives. On the other hand, they also carry the disadvantages that numbers have, including a potential loss in richness of meaning.

Pedhazur and Schmelkin (1991) argue that qualitative methods rely heavily on the researcher's knowledge and experience of the topic of the research, in order to identify patterns, extract themes and make generalisations (Pedhazur and Schmelkin, 1991: 31). Indeed, the selection of an appropriate research method is critical to the success of any research project, and must be driven by the research question and the state of knowledge in the area being studied.

3.7 The case study of Mayaga region

Given the size of Rwanda, there were difficulties posed for the researcher in conducting survey research on all women's cooperatives in Rwanda as a whole. The research thus targeted the Mayaga region for a case study, for the reasons described in the background of the research. As a distinct approach to research, the use of the case study originated only in the early 20th century. Gray (2007) traces the phrase 'case study' as far back as 1934, after the establishment of the concept of a 'case history' in medicine. Furthermore, Gray shows that the use of case studies for the creation of new theory in social sciences has been further developed by the sociologists Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss who presented their research method, grounded theory, in 1967 (Gray, 2007: 456). Nevertheless, Stake (1995) shows that the popularity of case studies in testing hypotheses was developed only in recent decades. One of the areas in which case studies have been gaining popularity is in education, particularly educational evaluation. Case studies have also been used as a teaching method and as part of professional development, especially in business and legal education (Stake, 1995: 18)

Bent (2001) shows that when selecting a case for a case study, researchers often use information-oriented sampling, as opposed to random sampling. This is because the typical or average case is often not the richest in information. Extreme or atypical cases reveal more information because they activate more basic mechanisms and more actors in the situation studied (Bent, 2001: 63). In addition, from both an understanding-oriented and an action-oriented perspective, it is often more important to clarify the deeper causes behind a given problem and its consequences than to describe the symptoms of the problem and how frequently they occur. Bent (2001) argues that random samples emphasizing representativeness will seldom be able to produce this kind of insight; it is more appropriate to select a few cases chosen for their validity (Bent, 2001: 72).

In this research, Mayaga region was chosen, but the findings will be generalised for the whole of Rwanda. In the same way, the sample of twelve cooperatives will give an accurate picture of cooperatives in the whole Mayaga region and Rwanda as a whole.

The case study is effective for generalizing the type of test called falsification which forms part of critical reflexivity. Falsification is one of the most rigorous tests to which a scientific proposition can be subjected: if just one observation does not fit with the proposition it is considered not valid generally and must therefore be either revised or rejected. A famous example is, “all turkeys are black”. Just one observation of a single white turkey would falsify this proposition and in this way have general significance and stimulate further investigations and theory-building.

3.8 Research delimitation

The research chose Mayaga region as a specific case that can be applied to any patriarchal society where women have been/are objects of discrimination and abuse, insecure in their rights of access to land, and deprived of their rights of access to other community resources. In view of this, Mayaga can be a mirror that any country can use for self-evaluation in terms of gender discrimination and gender-based poverty. At the same time, this region can be used as a model for women struggling for their rights, dignity and empowerment by trying to be economically independent of men through their own determination in grouping themselves in cooperatives. Mayaga region in Rwanda is one of the regions which make a good example and a model for community development and cooperative movements.

3. 9 Limitations of the Study

Often, though not always, social research represents an intrusion into people's lives. The researcher's visit or the arrival of a questionnaire signals the beginning of an activity that the respondent has not requested and that may require significant time and energy. Indeed, participation in a social experiment disrupts the subject's regular activity. In view of this, my respondents knew that some organizations conducting interviews pay respondents some allowances associated to the time they spend in interviews. Hence, the researcher was committed to being clear that he did not plan any payment to respondents as some organisations do, instead explaining how helpful the outcome of the research will be to the region.

Another limitation is associated with culture. Normally, many Rwandans are not very open, and with women, this cultural attribute is exacerbated. Moreover, as was seen during the fieldwork, the presence of even the very few men who participated in the interviews as observers meant that some women respondents were not free to talk publicly. Some of them preferred to give their views through filling in the questionnaire (see appendix 1, ii). Another challenge was that during the focus groups, respondents were required to reveal personal information about themselves – information that seemed to be unknown to their friends and associates. In some cases, respondents made comments on information revealed by a fellow respondent, unintentionally frustrating her. In view of this, the researcher was concerned that some respondents were not comfortable to reveal personal information due to that behavior. Hence, the researcher was committed to limit comments on the views of a respondent or on the information provided by a respondent, as long as it is a personal information.

Whatever the challenge is, social research should never injure the people being studied, even when they volunteer for the study. Perhaps the clearest instance of this norm in practice concerns the revealing of information that would embarrass subjects or endanger their home, lives, friendships, jobs, and so forth. In view of this, Babbie (2007) makes social researchers aware that, because subjects can be harmed psychologically in the course of social research, the researcher must look for the subtlest dangers and guard against them. Furthermore, Babbie (2007) highlights that the clearest concern in the protection of the subjects' interests and well-being is the protection of their identity, especially in survey research. If revealing

their survey responses would injure them in any way, adherence to this norm becomes all the more important (Babbie, 2007: 64)

Another challenge was limited time and resources. Mayaga region is mainly rural and it covers a radius of approximately 200km. Hence, it was not easy to reach some places, given that some places can only be accessed by private transport. The researcher was able to study only a sample of the women's cooperatives in Mayaga region through the sampling procedure that has been described above. This methodology was applied with the view that the situation of women's empowerment within the selected cooperatives in Mayaga will reflect the reality of the whole region.

3.10 Conclusion

This chapter discussed the methodology to be followed in this research. The data was collected using more than one method, as it is rare to find a qualitative study based on one method of data collection. The primary method of data collection adopted was that of focus group interviews. Twelve cooperatives were targeted as a sample and the members were divided into 24 focus groups. In supplement to the focus group interviews, individual interviews were conducted. Some respondents chose to fill in a questionnaire rather than participating in focus group. In the process of interviews, there were some basic ethical considerations to be respected (informed consent, rights to withdraw, debriefing/full disclosure and confidentiality) in order to protect the participants from any form of harm to them during this study.

This chapter also discussed the issues of case study research, research delimitation and limitations. Firstly, given the size of Mayaga region, the twelve cooperatives selected will reflect the reality of cooperatives in the Mayaga region, and Rwanda as a whole. Secondly, we have seen that this research was delimited to Mayaga region, because it was difficult to cover the whole country. Thirdly, this chapter showed that some limitations were found, especially in the context of culture. Time and resources were two other constraints on this research.

Finally, this chapter showed that the researcher informed participants that they were entitled to a summary of the outcome of the interviews and this was done during the second tranche

of fieldwork. Respondents were shown a report of their discussions or interviews so that they could check if the report contained all their views, or if they were misunderstood or misinterpreted.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE CONTEXT OF POST-1994 RWANDA

4.1 Introduction

The Rwandan genocide refers to the 1994 mass killing of a least 800,000 of Rwanda's Tutsi and Hutu political moderates, as much as 20% of the total population of the country. The mass killing was instigated by the Hutu dominated government under the "Hutu power ideology"⁴, and took place over a period of approximately 100 days, from April 6 through to mid-July 1994 (Rwanda genocide: <http://daymix.com/Rwandan-Genocide/>). Other sources show that in this worst slaughter in African history, "almost one million people were killed during some 100 days in Rwanda in 1994 and the number of genocide victims is however even larger than that" (Kakwenzire and Kamukama, 2000: 75). According to UN, some 95 000 children were orphaned during the genocide, and the United Nations (UN) estimates that between 250 000 and 500 000 rapes were committed during the genocide (United Nations, 1996).

In July 1994, a government formed on the basis of the "Arusha Agreement" manifested the end of the genocide and massacres, but not the end of conflict. Rwanda continued to be challenged by aggressive acts within its borders while at the same time being part of a war beyond its borders, in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). Thus, a post-crisis conflict period followed the end of the genocide. Although the government was formed, the problems of rebuilding and redressing state authority were enormous (Kladoumadje Nadjaldongar Celhto: <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/37/50/41425587.pdf>).

⁴ Hutu Power was an ideology founded and supported by the *Akazu* (inner house) and other *Hutu* extremists and this ideology was the root cause of the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi and moderate Hutu. Voices arose that became synonymous with the thinking of *Hutu* power during this period. One of the Rwandan journalists Hassan Ngeze, stated to be recruited by the government to fight the Tutsi publication *Kangura*, created and edited another newspaper called *Kangura*, a radical Hutu Power newsletter well known for the "Hutu Ten Commandments", which fought against the intermarriage between Hutu and Tutsi, that the education system must be constituted by a Hutu majority, and that Rwandan armed forces must be exclusively Hutu (Hutu power, Wikipedia: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hutu_Power).

The economic situation in post-1994 Rwanda was disastrous. Hence, the use of external actors was required because of the diminished capacity of Rwanda's institutions. External aid and advice were needed to restore the situation. However, for lasting peace and development, outsiders must work with local government and non-governmental entities to restore the delivery of critical public services. However, in a country like Rwanda whose history was characterised by ethnic divisions and gender-based discrimination, without a clear understanding of the power dynamics between men and women across different identity groups and how they affects cultural attitudes and behavior. The same applies to challenging all forms of exclusion as part of social change, whether it is gender, class, ethnicity or religious-based (Lindsay, Gündüz and Subedi, March 2009: *ibid.*).

This chapter also explores cooperatives as one of the institutional initiatives to enhance women's empowerment and to sustain community development. While cooperatives have seen many successes and failures during the post-1994 reconstruction and development of Rwanda, no other institution has brought so many people together for a common cause..

4.2 Description of Rwanda and Mayaga region

Firstly, looking at the general context of Rwanda in which Mayaga region, that is the case study of this research, is situated; some fundamental features of Rwanda are as follows (Economic situation of Rwanda: <http://www.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rwanda>; IMF (International Monetary Fund) Memorandum, 21 March 1997; World Bank Global Monitoring report, 10 March 1997 & <http://www.rwandainvest.com/conference/rwanda.php>):

- The population is now estimated at 10 million of whom only 17 % are urbanized. 54% of the total population is female. Official languages are English, French and Kinyarwanda, but Kiswahili is also used in commercial hubs.
- Principal religions: The nation is made up of 56.5% Roman Catholic, 26% Protestant, 11.1% Adventist, 4.6% Muslim, original beliefs 0.1%, and none 1.7%.
- The population living below the poverty line is estimated at 60%, of which 80% live in rural areas and approximately 60% are women.
- The economy of Rwanda is mainly agricultural. In 2002, the agricultural sector accounted for 43% of GDP and this sustains almost 90% of the population.

- With 54 % of women in the parliament, today Rwanda ranks first among the countries of the world, involving the highest percentage of women in decision-making structures at all levels of the society.

Secondarily, to understand the context in which this research is undertaken, we need to look at some fundamental features of Rwanda and some peculiarities of Mayaga region. For the specific example of Mayaga region, some peculiarities are outlined below (see Rapport Mensuel sur la Securite au Rwanda: <http://www.grandslacs.net/doc/2613.pdf>; Mayaga modern map:<http://www.mapmonde.org/Africa/Rwanda/prefecture-de-gitarama/>):

- When Belgian Colonialists distributed land in 1954 in Mayaga region, no woman or girl could own a piece of land; instead, little boys were eligible to get a piece of land.
- Until 1994, Mayaga region was stated to be one of the regions to have the highest rate of polygamy and women abuse in Rwanda. The perpetration of such acts in that region are commonly committed in the name of and under the cover of ‘culture’.
- For the last thirty years, Mayaga was said to have the highest rate of crime, whose main root is alcoholism and drugs. The beer called “Kanyanga” is known to be made mostly in Mayaga region. Nevertheless, this beer is prohibited by the police due to its high alcoholic content, often used as lamp fuel in rural areas.
- Mayaga region has the highest rate of women’s illiteracy (65%), because girls attending schools were very few until 1994. This is due to the patriarchal system that is known to be strong in that region.
- Together with some other regions of Rwanda like Umutara and Urukiga regions, Mayaga is known in Rwanda as a traditional society, and by deduction, a society with unequal and unfair relations between spouses.
- In 1994, the genocide had the most devastating effects on the Mayaga region; worsened further by the explosion of single-parent families (38% of women head families).
- Mayaga region is the first rural area in Rwanda where the rate of HIV/AIDS infection rose between 1988 and 1996. This scenario was partly because of the many cases of women raped in the 1994 genocide, as well as women’s poverty that results in adopting risky practices varying from the sex industry to selling “kanyanga” and

drugs. From the reality of Mayaga, one can state that gender discrimination, poverty and HIV/AIDS are interconnected.

- Mayaga is known to have the biggest number of cooperatives and associations in Rwanda, most of which are women-dominated cooperatives. About 375 were registered; 80% are agricultural, 10% do different businesses such as hand crafts and 10% work as civil society organizations, playing an advocacy role and promoting human rights. In the context of civil society, the term used is ‘association’ and not cooperative, according to the new policy legislating cooperatives in Rwanda, as set in 2007.

Mayaga region is situated in the Eastern part of the Southern province of Rwanda and constituted by the former districts of Mugina, Ntongwe, Muyira, Ntyazo, Mugusa, Muyaga and Gisagara (see the map 2). After the 2007 administrative reform in Rwanda, now Mayaga covers the districts of Kamonyi, Ruhango, Nyanza, Gisagara and part of Huye district. In other words, the only districts of the Southern province which are not covered by Mayaga region are Nyamagabe and Muhanga. One can summarize the peculiarities of Mayaga region in three points: first, it is a region with a central plateau, with valleys and low mountains, second, the population dwells almost entirely in rural areas; third, the considerably high population density in some areas like Gisagara district.

The word Mayaga is from a Kinyarwanda verb “kuyaga” (‘to shine’). Mayaga region is very hot in summer, and when you look at the mountains of Mayaga from afar, because of the heat, they look like shining or boiling oil. Because of this climate, when the weather is good, Mayaga is the food basket of Rwanda; but when there is a shortage of rain, Mayaga becomes one of the regions stricken by famine.

Map 2: Rwanda political map



See: Rwanda Political Map: <http://www.mapsofworld.com/rwanda/rwanda-politicalmap.html>

The climate in Mayaga is suitable for many plants: banana, beans, sweet potato, soya bean, avocado, coffee and tobacco among them. The table 7 shows the main crops cultivated in Mayaga region according to the different seasons and the proportion of production.

Table 6: main crops in Mayaga region

Season A (September- January)		Season B (February – July)	
Crop	Proportion	Crop	Proportion
Beans	35.6	Sorghum	23.7
Banana	22.1	Beans	19.6
Sweet potato	7.9	Banana	19.6
Maize	6.9	Sweet potato	8.3
Cassava	6.9	Cassava	7.4
Coffee	5.4	Coffee	5.8
Sorghum	3.7	Maize	4.4
Irish potato	2.9	Green pea	2.9
Green pea	1.7	Irish potato	0.9
Groundnut	0.6	Groundnut	0.5

Soybean	0.1	Wheat	0.4
Wheat	0.1	Soybean	0.1
Others	6.1	Others	6.9
Total	100.00%	Total	100.00%

Source: Bart, 1993: 49

The above table shows that agriculture in Mayaga region is mainly for subsistence. All of the crops mentioned are cultivated for local consumption, although some companies are trying to export banana and cassava to Europe, but the initiative is still in the early stages. Mayaga was one of the main regions that were producing a lot of coffee, but after the prices were cut in the 1980s, many people in Mayaga region cut down their coffee trees to cultivate subsistence crops, and in most cases, coffee farmers were confronted with the local government's department of agriculture which did not agree with them cutting down coffee trees.

In addition, after Umutara and Bugesera regions, Mayaga is the third region in Rwanda for breeding domestic animals. The table 4 (see next page) shows how people in Mayaga region breed more cows than any other domestic animal. The system is to keep individual domestic animals in one's own homestead and in some cases, be allowed to use some common property areas, land managed by the local government. Mayaga region is known in Rwanda (together with Bugesera) to have many such communal areas.

Table 7: Situation of domestic animals in Mayaga region

Cattle (Cows)	Sheep	Goats	Pigs	Others
32%	10%	28%	26%	4%

Source: Bart, 1993: *ibid.*

4.3 Demography and economic situation of the Southern province in the post-1994

The Southern province was created during the decentralisation process in 2006. In fact, under the Rwanda Decentralisation Strategic Framework (RDSF) in 2006; the 11 provinces, namely: Kigali City, Kigali rural, Byumba, Kibungo, Gitarama, Butare, Gikongoro,

Cyangugu, Kibuye, Gisenyi and Ruhengeli, were brought to 5 provinces, namely: Kigali City, Eastern province, Southern province, Western province and Northern Province (see the Rwanda political map below). The Southern province which hosts Mayaga region has a square of 5987 (km square), and a population of 2, 079,817. The Southern province is headquartered at the historical town of Nyanza (CGIS – UNR, 2003). More details are found the Rwanda political map (map 2).

Agriculture is the main component of the province's development, and of Rwanda as a whole. Although there is no specific data available on agriculture in the Southern province, the overall situation in Rwanda illustrates the situation in the provinces. The reality is that of the estimated 10 million people, 90% depend on agriculture or agriculture-related activities, but most people are poor subsistence farmers. In fact, if statistics say that agriculture accounts for 43 % of GDP in Rwanda, it is reflecting tea and coffee that make up this percentage of GDP, as these are cash crops. However, whether in Rwanda or in the Southern province, agriculture is constrained by a number of factors: high population density of 345 people per km², small farms averaging 0.2 ha, declining soil fertility, low levels of fertilizer use, environmental fragility and limited off-farm employment (Republique Rwandaise, 1997: 54).

Byiringiro and Reardon (1996) state that the Southern province was the most stricken by the 1994 genocide due to a concentration of Tutsi and moderate Hutu in the area. Moreover, before 1994, despite being the food basket of the region, the Southern province was in some cases poverty-stricken due lack of rain, and having a high rate of vulnerable people (especially in the former Butare and Gikongoro provinces). The 1994 genocide has swelled the ranks of vulnerable groups in the province and created new ones, such as child-headed households, widows or women whose husbands are in prison, unskilled and unemployed youth, landless farmers and people with disabilities.

All of the above, combined with the province's steep terrain and a lack of intensive farming practices, have served to create immense pressure on the province's land and natural resources and to fuel the vulnerability context of the population of the province, especially women (Byiringiro, 1996: 127-136). Moreover, research conducted by MINALOC (2007) in the Southern province tries to identify and summarise the factors that contribute to fuelling poverty in the province: "low agricultural productivity leading to poorer yields for major crops, population pressure on arable land, poor agricultural techniques, rural

unemployment/underemployment, lack of savings and investment in rural households; and weak environmental conservation practices” (MINALOC, 2007: 17). However, these causes are almost the same in all provinces.

Table 8: Population and population density in Rwanda

Provinces (in 2003).	Provinces (after the reform in 2006)	Population	Area (km ²)	Population Density per km ²
Kigali City	Kigali City	608,141	313	1,943
Gitarama	Southern	864,594	2,141	404
Butare	Southern	722,616	1,872	386
Gikongoro	Southern	492,607	1,974	250
Cyangugu	Western	609,504	1,894	322
Kibuye	Western	467,745	1,748	268
Gisenyi	Western	867,225	2,047	424
Ruhengeli	Northern	894,179	1,657	540
Byumba	Northern	712,372	1,694	421
Kigali- Ngari	Eastern	792,542	2,780	285
Umutara	Eastern	423,642	4,230	100
Kibungo	Eastern	707,548	2,964	239
Total/Average		8,162,715	25,314	322

Source: MINECOFIN, 2003A: 17

Table 9: The synthesis of population and population density (MINECOFIN: *ibid.*)

New provinces	Population	Area (km ²)	Population Density per km ²
Kigali City	608,141	313	1,943
Southern Province	2,079,817	5987	1,040
Western Province	1,971,428	5,689	1,014
Northern Province	1,606,551	3,351	961

Eastern Province	1,210,432	9,974	624
Total/Average	8,162,715	23,314	1116

Looking at tables 9 and 10, one can see that the Southern province is the most populated with over 2 million people. It is the second biggest province with an area of 5987 (km²) after Eastern province with an area of 9,974 (km²), and is second in population density per km² after Kigali-City, the capital of Rwanda. In fact, although statistics show that about one million people died during the 1994 genocide, Rwanda is still among the ten most densely populated countries in the world (Demographics of Rwanda: <http://www.intute.ac.uk/worldguide/>). Although it is not easy to establish the real root of the high population in Rwanda generally and in the Southern province specifically, socio-cultural factors are among the main ones. Apart from these factors, there is also a political factor originating in Belgian colonialism.

The fact that land title and land tenure in Rwanda have always tended to be vested in men was a legal condition, but was rooted in the socio-cultural tradition. Indirectly, daughters usually waive their land rights in favour of their brothers, to avoid being denounced as "selfish," and risk being alienated from their natal families (Kelkar, 1992: 14). This often results in social pressure for women to bear as many sons as possible, as this can be their only means of security of access to land. In fact, this is not peculiar to Rwanda only; a report from FAO (1995) shows that in the Middle East, women rarely own land, and when they do, the land is often controlled or managed by male relatives until marriage, after which the titles are transferred directly to their sons (FAO, 1995:19).

With regard to security, in traditional Rwanda the number of children meant how powerful the family was in the society. A family with a large number of children could send some to military service and to other structures of the kingdom. By contrast, a family who had no one to send was marginalised in the society. Moreover, during the civil wars that characterised the former Rwanda, big families could defend themselves and small families were vulnerable to attacks and sometimes were exterminated. Therefore, polygamy in the former Rwanda was aimed at having many children who can protect the family in a situation of conflict.

In the specific case of the Southern province, there is another reason for both for high density of population and overpopulation. Taking the case of Save (Gisagara district – **see map...**), when Belgian colonialists were building Astrida capital, people from the suburb of Taba were evicted and pushed to settle in Save, a small place of about 900 square km for an evicted population of about 300 000. In view of this, it is clear that the overpopulation in the region of Save (Southern province) is the result of the Belgian lack of a clear expropriation and resettlement policy. However, the same story continued after independence; poor people have always been complaining about eviction from cities to places with poor hygiene and infrastructure, also due to the lack of a clear policy during the early years of independence (Demographics of Rwanda, <http://www.intute.ac.uk/worldguide/>).

The consequences of the high density of population are diverse. A report from MINECOFIN (2003a) shows that in densely populated areas of the province (i.e. Save and Ndora in Gisagara district) and the wetlands of the southern parts of the province, landholdings were especially small, thus creating severe land constraints and serious poverty problems in these rural societies. According to a 6 450 household survey on poverty carried out from 1999 to 2001, the population ratio of those living below the poverty line was the biggest in Gikongoro Province (present Southern Province, 77.18%), followed by Butare Province (present Southern Province, 73.62%), and by Kibuye Province (present Western Province, 72.48%) (MINECOFIN, 2003A: 17). Given the fact that women are more invested in subsistence agriculture than men, the consequences of the scarcity of land falls mainly on women. In view of this, in the poverty reduction process, whether in the Southern province or Rwanda as whole, development practitioners and policy makers need to adopt a more holistic perspective that supports women to lay the foundation for long-term independence and economic security, as a strategy for sustainable development.

With regard to the high population density in the Southern province and Rwanda as a whole, by a simple observation, one can see that the population in Rwanda will soon reach a level where there will not be enough resources to sustain life as we know it. Hence, population growth must be checked, not only in the Southern province, but in Rwanda as a whole, in order to avoid this catastrophe. Indeed, as we will discuss later in this chapter, many environmental, social, and economic problems either stem from or are increased in magnitude by the overpopulation problem. With an exponentially increasing population, the problems created by overpopulation grow correspondingly. However, to ensure population stability not

only in the increasingly wealthy third-world areas, but also in the industrialized areas, countries and individuals must work together to achieve zero population growth.

4.3.1 Mining and industry in the Southern province

Rwanda's natural resources are limited, whether in the Southern province or the whole country. However, the Southern province is known for its gold, exploited in a part of the Nyungwe natural reserve. But there is a problem of choice, whether to use Nyungwe as a mining site, or as a tourist destination. Indeed, the same Nyungwe natural reserve is a destination of many tourists and is the home of many species, especially birds that cannot be found anywhere else in the world (Ministry of Land, Environment and Human Resettlement: 2001).

Nevertheless, looking at the overall situation of Rwanda, it is estimated that the small mineral industry provides about 5% of the foreign exchange earnings for Rwanda. Furthermore, concentrates of the heavy minerals - cassiterite, columbite-tantalite, and wolframite - are most important and are found mostly in the northern part of the Southern province, followed by small amounts of gold and sapphires. Furthermore, given the abundance of mountain streams and rivers in the Southern province, the potential for hydroelectric power is substantial. Rwanda is exploiting these natural resources through joint hydroelectric projects with Burundi and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and internally, Rwanda is running small hydroelectric projects mainly in the Southern province, to supply electricity for a portion of local villagers.

The Handcraft Industry is thriving and this is done mostly by cooperatives. Numerous industries ranging from brick-making (Briqueterie de Karubanda), to matchboxes (Usine de Boite d' Allumettes de Karubanda) and mineral water factories (Huye Mineral Water) can be found in the province. The manufacturing sector in the Southern province was very badly affected by the 1994 genocide, mostly the larger enterprises such as CONFIGI, "Usine d'allumettes", SORWATOM (a tomato factory), and so forth. It was estimated that by mid-1997, up to 75% of the factories functioning in the Southern province before the 1994 genocide had returned to production, at an average of 75% of their capacity (Haub, 2006: *ibid.*). This was achieved and retail trade which was devastated by the 1994 genocide has revived quickly, with many new small businesses established in the Southern province and

Rwanda as a whole, by some investors from the Rwandan returnees from Uganda, Burundi and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

In post-1994 Rwanda, industry received little external assistance. Beginning in 1996-97, the government has become increasingly active in helping the industrial sector to restore production through technical and financial assistance, including loan guarantees, economic liberalization, and the privatization of state-owned enterprises. In early 1998, the government set up a one-stop investment promotion center and implemented a new investment code that created an enabling environment for foreign and local investors. An autonomous revenue authority also has begun operation, improving collections and accountability, a system lacking in countries like DRC, Zimbabwe etc (Yager,2004: <http://minerals.usgs.gov>)

However, despite the efforts of the Rwandan government to empower agriculture, tourism, mining and industry and the economy as a whole, the overall process met challenging constraints of mismanagement in many government-owned enterprises and companies, whether related to agriculture, mining or tourism. In view of this, the central government of Rwanda has embarked on a program of comprehensive economic and social reforms, among them the privatisation of the public enterprises located in different provinces, mainly in Kigali city and the Southern province.

4.3.2 Privatisation of the state industries and enterprises

The overall mandate of the decentralisation and other reforms in Rwanda was “to ensure political, economic, social, managerial/administrative and technical empowerment of local populations to fight poverty by participating in planning and management of their development process” (MINALOC, 2007). However, experience showed that privatization in Rwanda and around the world is not gender-neutral. It threatens advances toward women’s equality in the labour market and in the home. In the labour market, “privatization usually means lower wages for women workers, fewer workplace rights, reduced health and welfare benefits, no pension coverage, less predictable work hours, more precarious employment, a heavier workload and generally more exploitative working conditions” (Ayres, 1995).

In Mayaga region, some companies and enterprises were privatized and the outcome was not totally positive. Some of the companies privatized were:

- SORWAL - Match company
- SORWATHE - Tea company
- SORWATOM - Tomato industry
- Bank of Kigali (B.K.)
- Commercial Bank of Rwanda (BCR)
- GIKONKO - rice mills. They were found to not be exploited to their full capacity and were left to the private sector who can make them more productive
- REDEMI - state-owned mining company. This was privatised and has many branches in the north of the Southern province, in the former Gitarama province
- RWANDATEL - a telecommunication company whose head-quarters are in the capital Kigali
- The biggest dairy, “Laiterie de Nyabisindu” in Nyanza district

Other factories, enterprises or companies in the Southern province are also in the process of privatization: Nyabihu and Rubaya Tea factories, Nshili-Kivu tea plantation, RWANDEX (a coffee factory), the Pharmaceutical Laboratory (LABOPHAR) and ELECTROGAZ (a state-owned electricity and water supply company).

Here you need to introduce the relationship between privatization and cooperatives, eg: Many women who were working in the above industries were put out of work by the new investors in the privatized companies, as they kept on few skilled workers. The retrenchment of workers from privatized enterprises in Mayaga region led to a loss of livelihoods. Some of those who lost their livelihoods were drawn into newly-formed cooperatives. Taking an example of one factory, the match factory (“usine de boite d’ allumettes”), the new investors (mostly Indians) bought new machines to carry the wood from the store to the kiln, work previously done by the lower- paid workers, predominantly women. This shows that privatization may reduce the government expenditure on public service delivery, but the negative impact falls on the women that the government claims to empower. Another example stated during the fieldwork is that most of the companies that used to hire women (90%) for cleaning, now hire cleaning companies run by people who are really not vulnerable, and are predominantly men.

A 1995 study of privatization of Brazil described it “as limited, converting public monopolies into private oligopolies with no beneficial impact” (Ayres, *ibid.*). A 1997 worldwide study of privatization by the World Bank revealed the minimal benefit of privatization by concluding that, “although private sector expansion may relieve governments from certain tasks, it also imposes new responsibilities” (World Bank, 2001b). Another example, in 1999 WLDI (Women, Law and Development International), a non-governmental human rights organization, conducted a research project in Russia, Poland, Ukraine, and Bulgaria entitled “Women’s Empowerment in the Process of Privatization” and a brief review of the results of national workforce surveys for each country in Eastern Europe showed the disadvantaged status of women relative to men in the workforce. It should be noted that market reforms driven by privatisation increased the disadvantaged status of women relative to men with regard to workplace conditions as will be explained in details in the next sections (UNDAW, 2001: http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/csw/empower/reports/Final_report.pdf).

Despite the above challenges, MINALOC (2007) shows that the privatisation programme in Rwanda generally and in the Southern province specifically was adopted by the central government to meet the following main objectives:

- Relieve the financial and administrative burden of the central government. It is meant to relinquish commercial management to the private sector and leave the Government free to concentrate on sovereignty functions of maintaining law and order and providing support for achieving growth and social objectives.
- Improve efficiency and productivity: this would be promoted through several means such as introduction of competition, doing away with civil service rigidities and the introduction of incentives for employees. High efficiency and profits will enable the Government to gain additional revenue especially in the form of corporate tax to finance projects under its socio-economic development plan
- Reduce the size and presence of the public sector in the economy: the gradual disengagement of the state from economic activities through privatisation will reduce the public sector which will allow the economy to be increasingly led by the private sector (MINALOC, 2007: 29)

4.4 The challenges faced by the post-1994 Rwanda and approach of solution

4.4.1 General challenges

These challenges combine the repatriation and resettlement of the refugees, demobilization and disarmament and reintegration of the former soldiers and militia, justice and unity and reconciliation. As shown by MINALOC- Ministry of Local Government (1997):

- Approximately 20% of the 7 million (pre-genocide) inhabitants perished
- The conflict resulted in 2 million displaced persons
- 2 million other Rwandans sought refuge in neighbouring countries, throughout Africa and the world
- 120 000 people suspected for involvement in genocide were held in country-run prisons (MINALOC, 2006)
- Thousands of people suffered physical or mental traumas related to the genocide, and above all, suffered from poverty as assets (financial, physical, natural and human, social) were destroyed (MINISANTE, 1997).
- Women were raped and infected with HIV/AIDS, leaving thousands of widows and orphans (MINISANTE, *ibid.*)

In view of the above situation, some big problems had to be sorted out by the post-genocide government – “the government of unity and reconciliation”⁵. Some of these problems were: unity and reconciliation, demobilization and disarmament and reintegration of the former soldiers and militia, the formation of a new national army and the creation of the new national police force. But the biggest of the problems was the repatriation and resettlement of over two million people, and to repair the social and economic infrastructure: schools, health centres, telecommunications, roads, energy and water, all destroyed by the 1994 genocide.

⁵ The “Government of Unity and Reconciliation” is the name given to the post-1994 Rwandan government after RPF (Rwanda Patriotic Front army) defeating the then President Habyalimana Juvenal’s army. RPF, its allied political parties and opposition parties formed a government that they called “government of unity and reconciliation”.

4.4.2 Environmental situation in the Southern province

The situation in the Southern province generally and in Mayaga region specifically shows that poverty and environmental degradation affect each other. Poverty in Mayaga forces poor farmers to engage in environmentally unsustainable practices like deforestation and overgrazing and this is illustrated by the photo 1 below.

Photo 1: Farming, deforestation and overgrazing in Mayaga region



It is suggested that land (as a natural resource) and poverty are linked to structural factors that have evolved over several decades. They include an interlinkage between land use and environmental degradation. Researchers in Rwanda recognize that poverty in Rwanda generally and in Mayaga specifically is closely related to series of interconnected issues, in particular land, environmental degradation and low resources. From a broader perspective, poverty as a problem goes beyond the lack of basic needs like food, clothing and shelter, to include lack or denial of social needs as well. As seen earlier, the environment in Mayaga region has been destroyed through the search for agricultural land and for settlement. After settlement, one could still see some small forests in Mayaga region, but these were slowly destroyed due to the search for firewood and building materials (MINICOFIN, 2002: 17). Local citizens in Mayaga region have been using wood for building houses as they could not afford the cost of bricks, and have been cutting trees for firewood because they could not pay for electricity installation in their houses and the bills for electricity used for cooking. As the situation is now, Mayaga region, 70% of which was a natural reserve till the 1960s, has now

only 5% of land for natural reserve. This clearly shows how poverty has a big impact on the environment and the way this impact can be also manifested to the economy as a whole.

Rwanda's current concern is also to improve its economic infrastructure as a basis for sustainable economic growth and poverty reduction. Economic transformation helps offset trends like the limited cultivable land area and current levels of agricultural exploitation that are already degrading the environment and are raising concerns about environmental sustainability (Ministry of Land, Environment and Human Resettlement, 2001)

Basic infrastructures like feeder roads enhance not only access to markets, but also better monitoring of endangered natural resources. For instance, improved road access has enabled authorities to monitor Gishwati Natural Forest in the North West against encroachment for settlement and farmland. Making of road is however done after clearing of vegetable cover. Other programs like settling of people in communal settlements locally known as Imidugudu, improves on the general welfare through provision of shelter and safe water. Again it reduces on risks of destroying forests and wetlands for settlement and agriculture. On the other hand however, those settlements were set up mainly on hillsides after clearing trees. This has opened the hills to vast soil erosion and silting (MINIPLAN, 2003). However, although some programs have had unforeseeable effects on the environment, generally the initiatives set up to alleviate poverty in Rwanda have had a remarkably positive impact on the protection of nature.

Moreover, a report from UNDP (2000) indicates that the goals of the "2008–2012 EDPRS" initiated by the central government are reflected in the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF), which has the following outcomes: (i) good governance is enhanced and sustained; (ii) the growth of the population is reduced and its health is improved; (iii) all children acquire a quality basic education and skills for a knowledge based economy; (iv) the management of the environment, natural resources and land is improved in a sustainable way; and (v) the population is less vulnerable to social and economic shocks. Indeed, natural resources in the Southern province and Rwanda as a whole are under serious pressure and the harmonisation of laws and various sectoral policies is necessary for their efficient conservation, and some major challenges are highlighted by the UNDP report (UNDP, 2000: <http://www.undp.org/bcpr>):

- Soil degradation which is due to lack of vegetation cover, overexploitation and inappropriate farming systems, and absence of anti-erosive measures especially in the former Gikongoro province and the north of the former Gitarama province.
- Deforestation which is mainly due to demographic pressure (need for new lands), uncontrolled production of domestic energy (charcoal, firewood, etc.), migration, and population resettlement. This is the case of Mayaga region. Indeed, before 1970, 75% of Mayaga region was a natural reserve, and now only 5% is a natural reserve.
- Pressure on wetlands (the clearing of natural swamps, hydro-agricultural development not associated with basin protection); and this results in reduced risks of floods and silting up of lakes
- Water contamination which is due to lack or insufficiency of clean drinking water supply systems, lack or absence of sanitation systems and waste water treatment, etc.
- Proliferation of dangerous aquatic weeds, especially all along Akagera and Nyabarongo rivers due to dissolved nutrients from pollution from industry, household discharged wastes, also from inappropriate agricultural practices and lack of water treatment practices (UNDP, 2000: <http://www.undp.org/bcpr>)

Population growth, poverty and environmental degradation are interrelated. Environmental degradation has been mainly attributed to the neglect of linkages between these problems, including the wider gender and social inequalities, unequal land tenure, power relations and political mobilization (see chapter two). For instance, rural women, in their efforts to satisfy their basic needs and, lacking alternative means of employment or access to capital, are frequently pushed to overexploit resources. It is in fact this challenge that pushed Care International to put more effort into the “Amashyiga project” or cooker project, initiated for both poverty reduction and environmental protection purposes. In this specific case, one can say that, to some extent, environmental degradation and poverty (especially in rural areas) are due to gender relations and gender-specific constraints that are not being addressed, and in particular to the fact that resource access and land tenure patterns have always tended to favour men.

Thus, tenurial relations, land alienation, and certain public policies, all of which have systemic effects on gender relations, can have more of an impact on environmental

degradation than does population growth per se. In other words, "it is not principally the sheer numbers of people that determine environmental health, but rather how those people act within particular socio-economic and ecological contexts"(UNRISD, 1995:28). For instance, in Tanzania's Rufiji district, it was recently found that unchecked deforestation was taking place in the delta region as a result of market forces, deficient definitions of land tenure rights and social disruption caused by compulsory resettlement in villages (UNDP, 2000: <http://www.undp.org/bcpr>)

Taking into account the experience of Care International, it is clear that poverty reduction cannot succeed without taking effective and real consideration of both gender and environmental dimensions. That is why environment is one of the priority areas identified by the Poverty Reduction Strategy in Rwanda and is among the first fundamental programmes retained by the PSTA (strategic programme for agricultural transformation) and the rural development programme. Hence, agricultural transformation and rural development in the Southern province must be accompanied by environment protection activities such as terracing, reforestation, water management, protection of catchments basins and rational utilisation of wetlands.

In the Southern province, the Poverty Reduction Strategy also recommends actions in the energy sector by encouraging in a particular way the rational use of wood and the promotion of alternative energy sources, such as the exploitation of "Nyiramugengeri"⁶ at Rwabusoro, in Nyanza district. It also supports water supply and actions of collecting and using rain water in clustered settlements and "imidugudu" or villages, because women are primarily responsible for water and fuel collection. From the experience of Care International in the Southern province, women's empowerment needs to be an integral part of agricultural transformation, rural development and environmental conservation if positive results are expected.

With the recent administrative reforms, districts have been entrusted with new powers in terms of environment management, and this will certainly have a positive impact on environment and natural resources management in the Southern province and Rwanda as a whole. The new organic framework within districts provides for the post of a professional in

⁶ "Nyiramugengeri" is a stock of energy underground created by the decomposed debris of plants. The Southern province of Rwanda (exactly in Mayaga region, Rwabusoro valley) is known in Rwanda to have a big stock of such energy. Now the Ministry of Energy is planning to exploit it, but without harming the environment of Rwabusoro, so it may be used for cooking.

charge of environment and natural resources at each level with the following duties (UNEP /United Nations Environmental Programme,2002: <http://www.unpei.org/PDF/Rwanda-Mainstreaming-env-energy-stras.pdf>)

- To follow up the implementation process of plans and master plan of land in terms of their usage (agriculture, livestock, housing, natural reserves, etc) with regard to environment protection and natural resources conservation;
- To develop a sensitisation programme on environment protection for the benefit of the population, and a sensitisation programme for private entrepreneurs so that they invest in activities aimed at environment protection;
- To promote new energy renewable sources and rational use of energy and water;
- To check up whether laws and regulations relating to activities of mine and quarry exploitation are respected, or whether recommendations from studies on environmental impact are respected during the execution;
- To set up pollution control mechanisms and development programmes for swamps and conservation;
- To warn competent authorities in case of breach of environment related regulations and disasters that constitutes a threat to environment quality (UNEP, 2002: <http://www.unpei.org/PDF/Rwanda-Mainstreaming-env-energy-stras.pdf>)

4.4.3 Challenges related to public health

Mayaga and Bugera regions were lucky to be targeted by the “paysanat project”, part of a rural planning system initiated by Belgians who traced roads in rural areas, cultivated planned crops, and benefited from clean water from 1954 until today. Recently, the rural areas of Mayaga were supplied with electricity, during a presidential visit in 2006. This helps women a great deal in terms of relieving the burdens of fetching water and collecting firewood, but unfortunately, some very rural areas of Mayaga still cannot access clean water and electricity. In fact, electricity supply requires its installation in one’s house and the monthly payment for its use, and not everyone can afford to pay for it.

Another issue for attention is that Mayaga is one of the regions in Rwanda which are stricken by malaria; and women are more often victims than men, given the fact that pregnant women

are very susceptible to malaria. In Rwanda, malaria is one of the leading causes of outpatient attendance, and in cases where a family member falls sick, it is only women who use their time to care for the sick. A report from the National University of Rwanda indicates that “40% of all health centre visits are due to malaria, which is the principal cause of mortality in every province in Rwanda, and in 2000 malaria-related mortality was 200 per 10,000 people and for children under five years it was 1,049. In 2001, throughout the country there were 976,182 new cases of malaria and 33% were children under five” (MINIPLAN, 2004: 38). Additionally, Rwanda News Agency (2008) informs that “in 2006, malaria in Mayaga region was responsible for 37% of outpatient consultations and 41% of hospital deaths, of which 42% were children under five” (Rwanda News Agency, 2008). Hence, although malaria is widely recognized as a major public health problem in much of Rwanda, its impact on a specific regional and national economy has proved difficult to assess. In fact, “an economic model which applies the average cost of malaria per case to the known number of cases in Rwanda for 1989 estimated the total cost to be \$ 2.88 per capita (in 1987 US dollars)” (Anspaugh, Dignan, and Anspaugh, 2006: 73). This shows how malaria cannot only be taken as a health issue, but also an economic challenge.

However, it is impressive to see how malaria was fought in Mayaga region and Rwanda as a whole. According to a report from MINISANTE (1997), “the bed nets, artemisinin-based therapies and indoor spraying have reduced malaria prevalence by a whopping 60% in Rwanda, and 70% in the selective area of Mayaga” (MINISANTE, 1997). Additionally, Rwanda News Agency reports said that using insecticide-treated mosquito nets and the latest drugs in a few months of 2007 in Rwanda “has succeeded in cutting malaria deaths in half, and that in August 2007, the US government funded program began indoor residual spraying in 155,000 Rwandan household (with 65% households in Mayaga region) to protect people from malaria” (Rwanda News Agency, 2008: Ibid.)

4.4.4 Problem of polygamy and the impact on the land disputes

The problems that women are facing in Mayaga region are common for many African women in rural areas. However, attention needs to be given to the issue of polygamy in Mayaga region, and its impact on women. Mayaga region is well known as a polygamous society, and this has always made the control of sexually transmitted diseases difficult (Locoh, 1994). That culture of polygamy also helps maintain a very high fertility level in Mayaga region. In

view of this, there have always been conflicts over land and property in general in Mayaga, for children from the same father but different mothers. Some cases of murder in connection to that issue are found in the area. The high fertility level also contributed to the explosive population growth in some areas of Mayaga region such as Ntongwe, Muyira, Ntyazo, since the 1950s, not only due to polygamy, but according to Karanja (1994), to “the transplantation of relatively cheap and effective health and sanitary technologies from developed countries that began to substantially reduce the extremely high mortality level” (Karanja, 1994: 37) in Rwanda and Africa as a whole. As shown above, women are the first victims of polygamy. In fact, Fapohunda and Todaro (1988) show that “the polygamous behaviour exposes nearly all women to early and prolonged risks of pregnancy; the polygamy system has helped maintain very high total fertility rates of between six and eight children in most of Mayaga region” (Fapohunda and Todaro, 1988: 65).

4.4.5 The post-1994 economic crisis and its root cause

The 1994 Tutsi genocide in Rwanda not only killed people, but destroyed community assets and created a disastrous economic situation. The crisis started in 1990 when the first measures of an IMF structural adjustment program were initiated. While the program was not totally put into action before the 1994 genocide, key measures such as two large devaluations and the removal of official prices were enacted. The negative impacts on salaries and purchasing power were quick and dramatic. This crisis particularly got effects on the educated elite, most of whom were employed in civil service or state-owned enterprises (Economy of Rwanda, 2010: http://danpritchard.com/wiki/Economy_of_Rwanda). During the 5 years of civil war that culminated in the 1994 genocide, “GDP declined in 3 out of 5 years, posting a dramatic decline at more than 40% in 1994, the year of the genocide” (MINICOFIN, 2007).

Moreover, the severe decline in the price of raw materials on the world market since 1987, as much as 60% for some assets, had put the country into an economic and financial crisis and an increase in unemployment and decrease in incomes followed. From 1991 – 1993, Structural Adjustment Programmes ended up by the decrease of state spending on health, education, extension and road maintenance, agricultural research, and price liberalization and the devaluation of the currency raised the prices of basic necessities (Fact sheet, World Bank Atlas, 1992: http://www.hubrural.org/IMG/pdf/fao_wia_cameroun.pdf).

Furthermore, Fierlbeck (1997) highlighted that growing poverty has negative effects on rural women particularly because they bear the important responsibility for providing for the survival of their families, and that malnutrition affects about 24% of rural children (Fierlbeck, 1997: 31 – 43).

Until 1989 when coffee prices collapsed, coffee was, after oil, the second most traded product in the world. In 1989, negotiations over the expansion of the International Coffee Agreement, a multinational effort to control the price paid to coffee farmers, decreased when USA, under pressure from big trading companies, withdrew, preferring to let market forces determine coffee prices. This resulted in coffee producers glutting the market with coffee and forcing coffee prices to their lowest level since the 1930s. While this did little to affect coffee buyers and sellers in wealthy countries, it was upsetting to the producing countries, such as Rwanda, and to the small farmers who produced coffee (Elson, 1992: 26-48; cited in Anup Shah, October 25, 2006: <http://www.globalissues.org/article/405/media-propaganda-and-rwanda>).

Indeed, SAPs involved cuts in public expenditure, decrease in public sector employment, higher prices for food and other crops, and decrease in the role of government intervention in the economy. Rather than allowing developing nations to spend the loans on education, healthcare, and other quality of life enhancement projects, the World Bank and IMF were mostly concerned with debt reimbursement and creating profits for corporations in developing countries. Furthermore, SAPs imposed the farming of market oriented crops to the indebted countries, as a strategy of paying back their debts (Bacchus and Foerster, 2005: <http://www1.aucegypt.edu/src/globalization/Documents/effect%20of%20glob%20on%20women.pdf>). Apart from food distribution, structural adjustments caused a cyclic pattern of dependence of developing nations upon the World Bank for monetary funding. As in many countries, SAPs allowed transnational corporations the freedom to enter into Rwanda and took advantage of the cheap labor force whose majority were women (Obidegwu, 2003: 40).

Furthermore, under structural adjustment programmes, extensive farming and commercial crop production are supported, based on the assumption that productivity increase is easier to obtain in the export as opposed to subsistence or locally-traded crops sector, and that the boost in income stemming from export production will guarantee national food security (Joekes, 1991: 47). As seen in the previous section, resources (land, labor, and inputs, including research) have been reallocated from subsistence production to the production of

export crops. Possible implications of this change are different, mainly for women who are concentrated in the subsistence sector and whose capacity to move into export crops is limited by various constraints, including: “(a) time (double burden of productive and reproductive tasks); (b) systemic (low access to credit, technological packages and marketing information); and, (c) socio-cultural (traditional responsibility for feeding and care of the household)” (Moghadam, 1999: 197, cited in FAO (Corporate Document Repository), 2003: <http://www.fao.org/docrep/x0250e/x0250e03.htm>).

Other constraints limit women’s access to resources by the low priority afforded to the subsistence farming sector. Increasing prices for basic food products, commodities and agricultural products often push women to remain at the subsistence level to cover more of the household’s food needs (Bacchus Nazreen and Foerster Amy, 2005: *ibid.*). At the same time, “reduced government involvement in such areas as marketing and pricing for subsistence agriculture leaves farmers responsible for areas in which they have no previous experience or training” (Moghadam, 1999: 204).

However, there has been a profound change in economy after 1994. For instance, “the 9% increase in real GDP for 1995, the first postwar year, signaled the resurgence of economic activity” (UN Report: 2009:<http://www.un.org/esa/population/publications/wpp2008/>) Furthermore, the Rwandan government achieved a 13% GDP growth rate in 1996 through reinforcing the collection of tax revenues, reinforced privatisation of state enterprises to stop their burden on the budget and resources of the government, and continued improvement in export crops and food production. Tea plantations and factories are still in the process of rehabilitation, and coffee, always a smallholder's crop, is being more seriously rehabilitated and tended as the farmers' sense of security returns (MINALOC, 2007).

In 2000, the influential Vision 2020 document outlined the main challenges and policy priorities of the Rwandan government up to 2020. It states, “Rwanda’s economic policies since independence are said to have targeted agriculture as the main engine of economic growth. However, the agricultural sector has continued to perform poorly, with consistently declining productivity” (GoR, 2000, 17). It will be necessary to formulate and implement realistic developmental policies that improve both the subsistence-based and the market-based agriculture, because in the context of Rwanda, it could be wishful thinking to claim to move beyond subsistence-based agriculture in the short-term. However, the foundation of any

progress for the rural poor is social transformation, in president Kagame's terms 'good mentality'. During the opening speech (2000), President Kagame called upon the Rwandan people:

Despite all this [referring to the many problems Rwanda is facing], I do not believe that we should lose hope and surrender ourselves to lives of poverty. If we can utilize the resources that God has given us to good effect, we can eradicate poverty. We would like to urgently appeal to the Rwandese people to work. As the Bible says, 'he who does not work should not eat'. I would like to request every Rwandese in whatever trade they are involved in, to work with dedication and diligence. If we adopt this culture of working diligently, we will be able to create more jobs for our people (Ansoms, 2007B: 371-379, cited in Discussion Paper / June 2008: <http://www.ua.ac.be/objs/00172207.pdf>).

In subsequent years, President Kagame would frequently speak of the burdens of the past, while emphasising on the responsibility of each citizen to fight his/her own poverty. The tone of the above quote suggests a fundamental assumption that poverty is, in fact, a state of mind, somehow a deliberate choice. Improving a living standard or getting out of poverty then becomes an issue of adopting an appropriate method or strategy and setting one's mind to it (Ansoms, *ibid.*). One of the strategy is the "performance contracts"⁷ (*imihigo*) adopted by the local authorities which households are supposed to sign. In these contracts, households make vows of the achievements that they will have attained in a period of one year, which will be based on the government's goals meant to uplift the country's economy and the people's welfare, and which be assessed by the local authorities. However, despite the fact that poverty in Rwanda decreased significantly between 1995 and 2001, the overall outcome, in terms of improved living standard, was rather unsatisfactory when set against the remarkable economic growth in the period (Ansoms, 2007B, *ibid.*)

However, social transformation is not only the result of the state of mind of the poor, in some cases, the poor may have a 'good mentality' but lack the social, financial, physical, human and natural capitals to deal with vulnerability. Additionally, there may be some disempowering policies that can be a barrier to access these community assets or capitals by the poor and the powerless.

⁷ Performance contracts are main objectives signed by the Mayor and the President of the Republic of Rwanda; commonly known as "Imihigo" in Kinyarwanda, and the Performance contracts guide the District's objectives during the whole year. The Performance contracts are based on the four pillars of the Government such as Good Governance, Justice, Social Affairs and Economy.

4.4.6 Human Development index

As shown earlier, there is no specific quantitative data about the situation of poverty in the Southern province, but the Human Development Index (HDI)⁸ on the overall situation in the country gives a picture of the situation in the provinces. Between 1980 and 2007 Rwanda's HDI rose by 0.94% annually from 0.357 to 0.460 today. HDI scores in all regions have increased progressively over the years (see table 7 at the next page). The HDI 2007 highlights the very large gaps in well-being and life chances that continue to divide our increasingly interconnected world. The HDI for Rwanda is 0.460, which gives the country a rank of 167th out of 182 countries with data (HDI: <http://hdrstats.undp.org/en/countries/>).

Table 10: Rwanda's human development index, 2007

HDI value	Life expectancy at birth (years)	Adult literacy rate (% ages 15 and above)	Combined gross enrolment ratio (%)	GDP per capita (PPP US \$)
1. Norway (0.971)	1. Japan (82.7)	1. Georgia (100.0)	1. Australia (114.2)	1. Liechtenstein (85,382)
165. Eritrea (0.472)	161. Burundi (50.1)	120. India (66.0)	151. Benin (52.4)	166. Madagascar (932)
166. Senegal (0.464)	162. Equatorial Guinea (49.9)	121. Ghana (65.0)	152. Cameroon (52.3)	167. Myanmar (904)
167. Rwanda (0.460)	163. Rwanda (49.7)	122. Rwanda (64.9)	153. Rwanda (52.2)	168. Rwanda (866)
Gambia (0.456)	164. Chad (48.6)	123. Guinea-Bissau (64.6)	154. Bangladesh (52.1)	169. Mozambique (802)
169. Liberia (0.442)	165. Mali (48.1)	124. Eritrea (64.2)	155. Mauritania (50.6)	170. Togo (788)
182. Niger (0.340)	176. Afghanistan (43.6)	151. Mali (26.2)	177. Djibouti (25.5)	181(D. Republic of Congo) (298)

⁸ Each year since 1990 the Human Development Report has published the human development index (HDI) which looks beyond GDP to a broader definition of well-being. The HDI provides a composite measure of three dimensions of human development: living a long and healthy life (measured by life expectancy), being educated (measured by adult literacy and gross enrolment in education) and having a decent standard of living (measured by purchasing power parity, PPP, income). The index is not in any sense a comprehensive measure of human development. It does not, for example, include important indicators such as gender or income inequality nor more difficult to measure concepts like respect for human rights and political freedoms. What it does provide is a broadened prism for viewing human progress and the complex relationship between income and well-being (Human Development Index: <http://hdrstats.undp.org/en/countries/>).

From the table 12, the Human Poverty Index (HPI) measures severe deprivation in health by the proportion of people who are not expected to survive to age 40. Education is measured by the adult illiteracy rate. Standard of living is measured by the unweighted average of people not using an improved water source and the proportion of children under age 5 who are underweight for their age. Table 8 shows the values for these variables for Rwanda and compares them to other countries (Human Development Index: <http://hdrstats.undp.org/>)

Table 11: Selected indicators of human poverty for Rwanda

Human Poverty Index (HPI-1)	Probability of not surviving to age 40 (%)	Adult illiteracy rate (%ages 15 and above)	People not using improved water source (%)	Children underweight for age (% aged under 5)
1. Czech Republic (1.5)	1. Hong Kong, China (SAR) (1.4)	1. Georgia (0.0)	1. Barbados (0)	1. Croatia (1)
98. Equatorial Guinea (31.9)	138. Burundi (33.7)	120. India (34.0)	120. Cambodia (35)	96. Tanzania (United Republic of) (22)
99. Nepal (32.1)	139. Cameroon (34.2)	121. Ghana (35.0)	121. Benin (35)	97. Haiti (22)
100. Rwanda (32.9)	140. Rwanda (34.2)	122. Rwanda (35.1)	122. Rwanda (35)	98. Rwanda (23)
101. Pakistan (33.4)	141. Equatorial Guinea (34.5)	123. Guinea-Bissau (35.4)	123. Uganda (36)	99. Benin (23)
102. Bhutan (33.7)	142. Chad (35.7)	124. Eritrea (35.8)	124. Liberia (36)	100. Guatemala (23)
Afghanistan (59.8)	153. Lesotho (47.4)	151. Mali (73.8)	150. Afghanistan (78)	138. Bangladesh (48)

Table 12 (see next page) shows how HPI measures average achievements in a country, but it does not incorporate the degree of gender imbalance in these achievements. The gender-related development index (GDI), introduced in the Human Development Report in 1995, measures achievements in the same dimensions using the same indicators as the HDI but captures inequalities in achievement between women and men. It is simply the HDI adjusted to reflect gender inequality. The greater the gender disparity in basic human development, the lower is a country's GDI relative to its HDI (HDI: <http://hdrstats.undp.org/en/countries/>).

Rwanda's GDI value, 0.459 should be compared to its HDI value of 0.460. Its GDI value is 99.8% of its HDI value. Out of the 155 countries with both HDI and GDI values, 15 countries have a better ratio than Rwanda's. Table 6 shows how Rwanda's ratio of GDI to HDI

compares to other countries, and also shows its values for selected underlying indicators in the calculation of the GDI.

Table 12: The GDI compared to the HDI – a measure of gender disparity

GDI as % of HDI	Life expectancy at birth(years) 2004 Female as % male	Adult literacy rate (% ages 15 and older) 2004 - Female as % male	Combined primary, secondary and tertiary gross enrolment ratio2004- Female as % male
1. Mongolia (100.0%)	1. Russian Federation (121.7%)	1. Lesotho (122.5%)	1. Cuba (121.0%)
14. Estonia (99.8%)	66. Bosnia and Herzegovina (107.4%)	100. Liberia (84.5%)	97. Malta (100.8%)
97. Malta (100.8%)	67. Hong Kong, China (SAR) (107.3%)	101. Turkey (84.5%)	97. Malta (100.8%)
16. Rwanda (99.8%)	68. Rwanda (107.3%)	102. Rwanda (83.7%)	99. Rwanda (100.7%)
17. Moldova (99.8%)	69. Guinea (107.3%)	103. Tanzania (United Republic of) (83.4%)	100. Cyprus (100.6%)
18. Paraguay (99.8%)	70. Libyan Arab Jamahiriya (107.2%)	104. Libyan Arab Jamahiriya (83.1%)	101. Oman (100.3%)
155. Afghanistan (88.0%)	190. Swaziland (98.0%)	145. Afghanistan (29.2%)	175. Afghanistan (55.6%)

Source: Human Development Index: <http://hdrstats.undp.org/en/countries/>.

Table 12 shows that, despite the achievement of Rwanda in the HDI, education of the girls is still low. From the above tables on HDI, in order to realise the progress done by Rwanda in terms of HDI, it is realistic to consider the impact of the genocide at all the levels of the society in Rwanda. However, the achievement of Rwanda in promoting infant and maternal health in the post-1994 as witnessed by Dr Flavia Bustreo (Kabeera Eric, November, 2010: <http://www.newtimes.co.rw/>) plays a big role in life expectancy- one of the indicators of human development used by HDI.

In fact, Rwanda has been ranked top in East Africa by the Partnership for Maternal, New born and Child Health (PMNCH), in the fight against child mortality and maternal deaths. The country, according to a 2010 Countdown to 2015 report, has between 2000 and 2008, “experienced one of the highest average annual rates of reduction in child mortality”

(Kabeera, November 2010: <http://www.newtimes.co.rw/>). With mortality decreasing at a rate of 6.3% every year, Rwanda has positioned herself to achieve a Millennium Development Goal and Rwanda is also indicated in a new study by the WHO, UNICEF, UNFPA and the World Bank as having one of the largest declines in maternal mortality with a reduction on maternal deaths by 51 per cent between 1990 and 2008 (Kabeera, November 2010: <http://www.newtimes.co.rw/>).

To attain the above achievements, the government of Rwanda initiated a development plan, summarized in the “Vision 2020”⁹ which is the frame of reference for all the provinces for their development plans. This vision was inspired by MDGs which is also a term of reference for many countries for their development plans. Rwanda’s main aim with the Millennium Development Goals and Vision 2020 is to enable Rwandans to emerge from under-development and poverty by achieving economic growth objectives in combination with social indicator objectives.

4.5 Rwandan government approach to solutions to the post-1994 crisis

4.5.1 Judicial, constitutional and reforms

This reform was shaped by Vision 2020 which is based on the following pillars: “the reconstruction of the Nation and its capital, the development of a credible and efficient state governed by the rule of law, human resource development in line with the objective of turning Rwanda into a prosperous knowledge based economy, women’s empowerment, fighting all forms of discrimination, rehabilitation and post-conflict reconstruction” (MINALOC, 2007: 37).

The Vision 2020 in Rwanda is the country’s overarching national planning and policy framework into which other strategies, programs, plans and policies are supposed to fit. The overall vision of the Rwandan government as set out in Vision 2020 is “to guarantee the well-being of its population by increasing productivity and reducing poverty within an

⁹ Rwanda’s Vision 2020 is the country’s overarching national planning and policy framework into which other strategies, plans, programs, and policies are meant to fit. The global vision of the government of Rwanda as set out in Vision 2020 is to guarantee the well-being of its population by increasing productivity and reducing poverty within an environment of good governance (Republic of Rwanda, Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning, *Rwanda Vision 2020* (2000), accessed online at www.moh.go.rw, on 19th April 2010)

environment of good governance” (Haub, 2006). The government also embarked on three major economic frameworks: Economic Development for Poverty Reduction Strategy (EDPRS), the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and joining regional economic blocs like the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) and East Africa Community (EAC)

In order to achieve all the above plans, it is clear that Rwanda was in need of both financial resources and policy advice. It was important that the response of the international development community and the commitment the Rwandan government of unity and reconciliation be as appropriate as possible. Alesina and Dollar (1998) make it clear that countries emerging from prolonged wars have to face the normal problem of socioeconomic development while accepting, at the same time, the additional challenge of reconstruction and peace reinforcement, so that they can in the future address their grievances through institutional and peaceful means (Alesina and Dollar, 1998: 33–63). The government of unity and reconciliation had to reconcile the development challenge with the additional burden of reconstruction and national reconciliation. Indeed, reconciliation processes which are not taken into consideration, ignored or delayed in the press of urgent humanitarian or political and economic situations, can generate serious challenges and deteriorate unsettled matters that make people defiant to overt attempts at sustainable peace and unity in the post-conflict situation. In addition to financial support and policy advice, the restoration of the justice system was relevant. In fact, the success or failure of the reconstruction process in the post-1994 Rwanda has its foundation in the existence of sustainable justice systems (United Nations, 1996).

Ikenberry (2001) highlights that “reconstructing the capacities of the state and the (re-) establishment of transparent, credible, efficient and participatory governance and public administration institutions in a weak post- conflict settings is the major ingredient to achieving stability, peace, and sustainable development” (Ikenberry, 2001: 293). Hence, the post-genocide nation-building in Rwanda comprised at minimum an ambitious plan of reforms as a part of the programme of good governance. Some of these reforms and programmes are: judicial and constitutional reforms, the rule of law, the establishment of mechanisms of inclusive policies and political participation, the effective provision of basic services and goods, fostering a democratic culture, fighting corruption, the promotion of local

governance and free and transparent elections, women's empowerment, and decentralisation (Dahl, 1982).

In spite of the enormous post-genocide challenges, Rwanda has been generally successful in consolidating a peaceful society, a stable and democratic state, the rule of law and a programme of reconciliation – unlike DRC, Sudan, Somalia or Zimbabwe. This is a good starting point for women's empowerment and the economy as a whole.

The Southern province has adopted its own developmental commitment, a comprehensive policy framework to guide its own strategic decisions, and those of donors as they worked toward the province's development, especially poverty reduction in conformity to the national programme of poverty reduction. The centrepiece of this framework is the poverty reduction strategy paper (PRSP), an ambitious plan to halve the proportion of Rwandans living in poverty by 2015 and which is applied in all the provinces. A report from MINECOFIN (2003A) shows that the plan's well-defined priorities and targets are summarized in Vision 2020, a policy statement that outlines the Government of Rwanda's objectives for the year 2020 (MINECOFIN -Ministry of Economy, Commerce and Finances, 2003A:17)

The PRSP, developed in consultation with the people of Rwanda, enjoys broad popular support among Rwandan civil society and has attracted donors. In view of this, referring to vision 2020, donors, including the government of Canada, have aligned their work in Rwanda with the plan's six priorities that are all geared to promoting economic growth of particular benefit to poor women and men: rural development and agricultural transformation, human development, economic infrastructure, governance and decentralization, private sector development, and institutional capacity building. The goals expressed in Vision 2020 are, in other words, Rwanda's own expression of the Millennium Development Goals and which are implemented in the provinces (Guichaoua, 1989). Some details about the vision 2020 and the Millennium Development Goals to be implemented in the provinces are found in the table 13 below.

Table 13: Rwanda vision 2020 and MDGs plans

Subject	Vision 2020	Millennium Development Goals
Poverty, economic growth	Reduce the population living below the poverty line from 60 percent to 30 percent by 2015; achieve annual economic growth equivalent to 7–8 percent of GDP until 2020.	Halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people whose income is less than one dollar a day; halve the proportion of people who suffer from hunger.
Gender equality	Achieve equal (50 percent) participation of women in tertiary training.	Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education by 2005, and at all levels of education no later than 2015.
Population growth	Reduce the population growth rate from 3.2 percent to 2.5 percent by 2010.	
Fertility rate	Reduce the average number of children per family from 6 to 4 by 2010.	
Maternal mortality	Reduce the maternal mortality ratio from 810/100,000 to 202/100,000 by 2015; make reproductive health services available to all.	Reduce by three quarters, between 1990 and 2015, the maternal mortality ratio.
Infant and child mortality	Reduce infant mortality from 107/1,000 to 35/1,000 by 2015.	Reduce by two thirds, between 1990 and 2015, the under-five mortality rate.
Literacy, basic education	Increase net primary enrolment from 72 percent to 100 percent by 2015.	Ensure that, by 2015, children everywhere will be able to complete primary schooling.

Prevalence of AIDS	Lower the prevalence rate of HIV infection from 14% to 5% by 2020	Halt, by 2015, and begun to reverse, the spread of HIV/AIDS.
Protection of soil against erosion	Increase protected area from 20 percent to 70 percent by 2020.	Mainstream the principles of sustainable development into country policies and programs; reverse loss of environmental resources.

Source: Guichaoua, 1987: 138

However, there are different factors that challenge the implementation of both Vision 2020 and the Millennium Development Goals. Taking the example of agriculture, which is supposed to play a big role in achieving both the 2020 vision and MDGs, the main constraint is the overpopulation on arable land as was highlighted above. Indeed, countless generations of farmers have tilled the hills of the Southern province, especially in Nyamagabe district. Due to an ever increasing population, farm sizes have decreased and farmers have been forced to intensify their production systems, to some extent threatening the environment. Permanent cropping and organic manuring have allowed for population concentrations of over 700 persons / km² in some agricultural areas, the national average amounting to 380 persons / km² usable land in 1989 (Cambrezy, 1984).

Apart from the scarcity of land and poor technology to exploit the little land in a productive manner, Steiner (1984) highlights that the exclusion of the rural population from seeking a solution to the land issue is another factor that complicates the problem. Indeed, it is not surprising to discover that the farming community possesses a considerable body of knowledge especially in soil management (Steiner, 1984: 39). What is surprising, however, is the fact that this knowledge has not been tapped at all, whether by agricultural research or by extension. Sperling and Steiner (1992) argue that it is only recently that farmers have been invited to participate in research and technology development, at least by some research teams and extension services (Sperling and Steiner, 1992: 26).

In a study conducted by Delepierre (1974) in 3 administrative districts (Ruhashya, Mugusa and Ntyazo) of Southern Rwanda, each representing a different agro-ecological zone: Plateau Central, Dorsale Granitique and Mayaga; in each district 40 farmers, in total 120 farmers, were selected in collaboration with the extension service. Farmers were interviewed, individually or in small groups, in their fields, thus facilitating communication. They all highlighted the problem of the scarcity of land as a constraint to rural development, and highlighted the issue of poor technology, limited access to loans, and lack of information on climate change as main factors that challenge rural agriculture, and by deduction, the whole development process in the province.

Taking into account all the above challenges, the central government initiated a new land reform policy and the reform of all agricultural processes, and improved production by promoting cash crops. It is in this way that tea and coffee farmers were empowered with fertilizers and small loans. Tea plantations and factories continue to be rehabilitated because they were seriously destroyed during the 1994 genocide and coffee is an income-generating crop for the rural farmers, especially in Nyamagabe district (see map 2, p.192). The biggest cooperative coffee farmers are still the ones of “Maraba” in Nyamagabe district, Southern province. However, despite the fact that tea and coffee are well known to be farmed mostly in the Southern province, women’s cooperatives continue to cultivate the crops that they can use for family subsistence and which do not take long to harvest (Blarel, 1994: 71-95). In fact, cash cropping alternatives are not welcomed by rural women, simply because their children cannot eat coffee.

Other challenges are related to the environment. As shown above, the Southern province is the source of the two biggest rivers in Rwanda (Nyabarongo and Akanyaru), and the source of the second big river in the world which is the Nile River. The province also has the famous natural reserve of Nyungwe that is a destination of many tourists, and different minerals in its northern part. Nevertheless, still people destroy the forest by cutting trees and by discrete and illegal exploitation of gold through traditional ways which are environmentally unfriendly. Usually, in the rural Mayaga region and in Rwanda as a whole, every family plants trees around the house to be used as firewood, but experience showed that this isn’t enough as a source of energy. That is why the local government in Mayaga region opted for the use of solar energy and “nyiramugengeri” in rural areas as source of energy to replace the firewood.

The reality is, poverty reduction cannot be achieved if the environmental dimension is not seriously taken into consideration. As a matter of fact, people can neither settle nor cultivate in some mining sites in the northern part of the Southern province, especially in the former Nyabikenke and Nyakabanda districts, due to the environmentally harmful methods of exploiting minerals used by Belgian firms in the 1940s. The areas surrounding these sites are targets for many sicknesses, mostly malaria because these sites are favorable to mosquitoes causing malaria. In view of this, the environment is part of the first priority area identified in the Poverty Reduction Strategy in the Southern province, and ranks first among fundamental programmes of agricultural transformation and rural development. Hence, in all the processes of development in the province, environmental issues need to be treated carefully and be integrated in the Economic Development for Poverty Reduction Strategy (EDPRS). As shown in the previous points, the EDPRS was developed during 2006 to guide the implementation of the national vision 2020 (Haub, 2006: 45). Another field which is being developed is tourism. In the five recent years, tourism in Rwanda improved dramatically and is now one of the key contributors to the Rwandan economy after tea and coffee.

4.5.1 Agricultural reform: Subsistence vs. market economy

As mentioned above, the majority of people in Mayaga region practice subsistence agriculture which is turn dominated by women. Originally all people on the earth lived in what we now call subsistence economies, described by Indian Eco-feminist Vandana Shiva as “economies in which you satisfy basic needs through self-provisioning”(Vandana Shiva, 1999). Instead of relying on money, subsistence economies depend on the riches of the natural world. People grow food, fish, and hunt to satisfy hunger, they build their own houses from natural materials, and they drink from the rivers and streams. Because they live intimately with nature, people living in subsistence economies are more able to view the benefits of respecting nature instead of exploiting it. A subsistence economy depends on nature to reproduce itself as well as human beings working in partnership with nature to ensure that plants, animals, and humans all survive. Within a subsistence economy, people value cooperation with nature and with each other (Vandana Shiva, *ibid.*).

Although it is difficult to give an accurate assessment of women's contributions to agriculture in Mayaga region and Rwanda as a whole due to the lack of statistics, it is estimated that rural women supply about 90% of the food needed for the subsistence of the population. Women

also participate in the cash crop sector but to a very limited extent. A report from the Ministry of Land, Environment and Human Resettlement (2001) shows that during the high growing season, women devote 6 to 8 hours a day to agriculture in addition to their household work, and that more than 20% of rural households were headed by women in 1989/90 (Ministry of Land, Environment and Human Resettlement, 2001). When coffee was still the most income generating crop in Mayaga, the men's work was focused mainly in this cash crop sector, and according to the report, one could see women bearing the entire responsibility for food production and also helping men with land preparation, harvesting and other work in the cash crops (*ibid.*). If one makes a simple observation of rural daily life, men are primarily responsible for fishing and livestock, while women are in charge of fish processing and marketing, raising poultry and small livestock, and share in the processing of milk products, both for home consumption and for sale. Women are also responsible for all domestic tasks, including food processing and the collection of fuel wood and water and for agricultural tasks of planting, ploughing, weeding and harvesting crops. The same report highlights that, "in general, rural women work 1.5 to 3 times longer than men" (*ibid.*).

Until recently, research and financial assistance have been directed to the export cash crop sector at the expense of subsistence food production, in other words, men benefited from financial assistance more than women. We have seen earlier that the fall in the price of raw materials on the world market has negatively affected the economy and the agricultural sector in particular. Consequently, the Rwanda's current agricultural policy includes increased food production, revitalization and protection of markets, and the development of improved food processing and storage.

Given the limitation of subsistence based economy in terms of long-term developmental progress, the Strategic Plan for Agricultural Transformation identifies, as a main challenge, the "transformation of subsistence agriculture into commercial agriculture with all its involvements in terms of institutional, social changes of behaviour and distribution of roles and responsibilities between different stakeholders" (GoR, 2004A, 33). However, the shift from a subsistence economy to a market-based economy means using the land that was used for that purpose and using it for cash crops. By deduction, that shift means reducing the land used by women for the subsistence of their families, using it instead for cash crops such as coffee and tea that hungry children cannot eat.

Today, most economic systems are dominated by the market, which refers to the exchange (buying and selling) of goods and services. But a market economy is not about simple exchange. Rather, it is about making money, earning capital, expansion, and most importantly growth. Market economies depend just as heavily on the natural world as do subsistence economies, only this dependence is ignored. Economics, or a system of sharing limited resources, is really just one aspect of human existence but in a market economy, economics becomes more important than everything else. Health, the environment, community - all of the physical, social, religious, and emotional aspects of our lives are subsumed or taken over by the economic aspects of our lives (Hayek, 1991: 117)

The economy becomes not an aspect of culture but culture itself. US President George W. Bush recently rejected the Kyoto Protocol saying it was "bad for the economy," meaning it will get in the way of making money. Good for health, good for the environment, good for people, none of these are good enough reasons. Economist E.F. Schumacher says that in a market economy, "Anything that is found to be an impediment to economic growth is a shameful thing, and if people cling to it, they are thought of as either saboteurs or fools" (Schumacher, 1999). Economic growth is measured simply in terms of money and it is the accumulation of money which is most valued. This focus on accumulation leads to short-term thinking. A forest is worth only the price paid for the trees once they are cut down, not the benefits it will provide to the environment and humanity for the next 10 or 100 or 1000 years (Schumacher, 1999: *ibid.*)

4.5.2 Involving women in decision-making and reconstruction

In response to such challenging post-genocide situation, for the process of reconstruction to be successful, inclusive development was necessary. We have seen earlier how the percentage of women in Rwanda is 54%. To exclude the majority of the population from the reconstruction and development process was a path to failure. Hence, the post-1994 Rwandan government, called the "Government of Unity and Reconciliation", adopted a policy of women's empowerment, consisting of equal opportunity for boys' and girls' education, facilitating women's access to micro-finance loans, and their participation in the decision-making structures from the grassroots to the national level. The government set up policies that protect women from abuse as a strategy for sustainable development and a tool for reconstruction of a new Rwanda after the disastrous genocide (Obbo, 1980: 35). The research

will look at the extent to which these policies are helping women working in cooperatives in Mayaga region, and will investigate how they advance the process of women's empowerment and the development of Rwanda as a whole.

The World Bank has identified empowerment as one of the key constituent elements of poverty reduction, and as a primary development assistance goal. Brown, Laliberte & Tubbs (2003) state that the "promotion of women's empowerment as a development goal is based on a dual argument: that social justice is an important aspect of human welfare and is intrinsically worth pursuing, and that women's empowerment is a means to other ends" (Brown, Laliberte & Tubbs, 2003: http://www.gwu.edu/~oid/Women_Tanzania.doc). For instance, Narayan (2002) in a recent policy research report by the World Bank, identifies gender equality both as a development objective in itself, and as a means to promoting growth, reducing poverty and promoting better governance (Narayan, 2002, 104).

Nevertheless, despite the positive steps made by Rwanda in terms of women's empowerment, one can see that patriarchal behaviour still persists, especially in rural areas of Rwanda generally and in Mayaga region specifically. To some extent, this behaviour threatens any effort towards women's emancipation. In other words, despite the fact that gender equality is a constitutional principle as per article 11 of the Rwandan Constitution of 2003, women's and men's rights, roles, and needs were always unbalanced in Rwanda before 1994. In spite of the gap caused by social imbalances, in the aftermath of a devastating period of genocide in the 1990s, the challenges of nation-building are still the hallmark of today's Rwanda. Consequently, in Rwanda today, the need for reconciliation between the Rwandan populations, the establishment of viable development, the advancement of a stable political order, and women's empowerment, are all issues that are being tackled and the contribution of everyone is needed, regardless of his/her gender status.

In fact, Chambers and Conway (1992) make it clear that it is now being recognised in development circles that economic growth and social development are best achieved when the mass of the community or beneficiaries of development are informed about and involved in development aims and plans, and sees themselves as a direct beneficiary of the expected resources that growth should bring (Chambers and Conway, 1992:162). Hence, one of the ways to achieve this is to structure the decision-making process in a way that ensures

widespread consultation at all levels of society about development goals, the processes by which those goals are to be reached and the resources needed to achieve them.

Poornima (1998) argues that if the involvement of women in decision-making in some countries (such as Norway) is able to bring about socio-economic change in their country and if such change advances the whole society, this may well serve as a tangible example to others of the wisdom of making women's concerns a central aspect of public policy and economic development if a sustainable development is to happen in our societies (Poornima, 1998:<http://ncw.nic.in/pdfreports/Gender%20Sensitization%20of%20Police%20Officers.pdf> & Moser, 1989). Nevertheless, in Rwanda and in many other African countries, the reality is that planners and policy-makers, who are often challenged for not setting up policies aimed at empowering women, are agents of state intervention in the economy and as such are not merely technical experts but also political actors. This implies that as part of the administrative apparatus of government, they are committed to meeting the short-term goals imposed on them by governments, and to working within the constraints made by the structure of the national economy - itself embedded in a global economic system.

From 1994 to 2003, the representation of women in Parliament (by appointment) was 25.7 percent before a new gender-sensitive constitution was approved and implemented in early 2003. Later in October 2003, the first post-genocide parliamentary elections raised the representation of women in the parliament to nearly 50%. The dramatic benefits for women originated from a specific mechanisms used to increase women's political participation and empowerment, among them a constitutional guarantee, a quota system and innovative electoral structures (International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, 2005: http://www.awid.org/eng/layout/set/print/content/download/51418/571545/file/WiP_inlay.pdf). Having achieved near-parity in the representation of men and women in its legislature, in 2003, Rwanda was stated by the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) to be first among all countries of the world in terms of the number of women elected to parliament. The percentage of women's participation is all the more noteworthy in the context of Rwanda's recent history. Rwandan women were fully allowed to stand for election in 1961, with independence from Belgium. The first female parliamentarian began serving in 1965. However, before the civil war in the early 1990s and the genocide in 1994, Rwandan women never held more than 18 percent of seats (International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, 2005: *ibid.*).

This period was characterized by gender-biased policies. For instance, until 1994, in cases of civil marriage, mayors were still using the law which says that a man who commits adultery is fined RWF 1000 (R15) while a woman was fined with divorce, if the man is willing to divorce for that incident. The problem was not to divorce, but to divorce in a situation where all the resources belonged to a husband, including the land and house; briefly, a divorce where a wife leaves with nothing, despite her labour during the years of her marriage. This disempowering law changed in the post-1994 Rwanda as it was stated by policy-makers and women's organizations to be discriminatory.

In fact, women's participation in politics and decision-making throughout the history of Rwanda has been insignificant, specifically in the higher echelons; although in the pre-colonial period; women in Rwanda played an important role in the country's governance through the institution of the 'queen mother'. In fact, it is known to every Rwandese that the king always consulted his mother before taking any sensitive decision, and several times, when the advisers of the king wanted to pass a relevant suggestion, they first convinced the "queen mother" before the king. However, this was not limited to the "queen mother", and many Rwandans (even today) consult their mothers before taking sensitive decisions. Unfortunately, this attitude was limited to consultations and women in Rwanda before 1994 were still discriminated against in different ways.

Rwandan women generally faced two main problems - exclusion from decision-making positions before 1994, and being targeted during the genocide due to their gender. In fact, many women were raped, murdered or disfigured. However, from the results of the 2003 elections, it is clear that Rwanda became a champion of gender equality sixteen years after the genocide. Women benefit from many rights they were formerly deprived of, including the right to own land, to start a business and open a bank. The government sees women as critical partners to alleviate rural poverty and key actors in unity and reconciliation. One of the indicators of women's empowerment in Rwanda is their level of involvement in decision-making. The presence of various "affirmative action"¹⁰ policies for women is fundamental in

¹⁰ Affirmative action" means positive steps taken to increase the representation of women and minorities in areas of employment, education, and business from which they have been historically excluded. When those steps involve *preferential* selection - selection on the basis of race, gender, or ethnicity - affirmative action generates intense controversy (Newton, Lisa, 1973. "Reverse Discrimination as Unjustified," *Ethics*, 83 (July): 308-312)

increasing women's participation at the grassroots level. Affirmative action such as setting up a quota system which aims at rising women's representation to a good level has positively motivated and increased women's political participation in Rwanda. These views were supported by two informants during individual interviews. The informants are two women involved in decision-making at the district level, and are part of some commissions at provincial and national levels. One is the gender desk officer in Nyanza district and the representative of women's councils in Ruhango district.

After getting the opportunity to participate in decision-making, the next stage for women in Rwanda is mobilizing and guide their fellow women particularly and Rwandan population generally to rebuild their own lives as well as their communities and country. Women cooperated and collaborated in forging unity and solidarity among themselves as the first step forward for the mobilisation of other women. For example, the Unity Club is a forum of top women leaders and spouses of top leaders in government, with the aim of initiating unity among themselves, and then preaching the message of unity and reconciliation among the communities (National Unity and Reconciliation Commission of Rwanda, 2008: http://www.nurc.gov.rw/uploads/research-WOMEN_IN_PEACE_BUILDING.pdf)

The Government of Rwanda demonstrated its will to give women the trust and responsibility of rebuilding the nation by appointing them to all positions of leadership and responsibility in society. For example, women are participating in the executive, legislative and judicial arms of the government. For the last ten years women have stood as exemplary leaders at policy level as well as community level. The presence of women in cabinet, parliament, the judiciary, and in all areas of life served as a role models and developed confidence among women, and this reinforced and opened up women's role in decision making (National Unity and Reconciliation Commission of Rwanda, 2008: Ibid.). Furthermore, women in Rwanda carried out concrete activities such as fostering orphans and helping them.

Another forum is the Forum of Rwandese Women Caucus (FRWC) which is constituted by women parliamentarians started as a caucus that brings women from different backgrounds together. They managed to lobby together and persuaded the enacting of laws that defend and promote the rights of women-such as inheritance laws, laws on the rights of the child, the rights of women at the workplace, etc. Besides, the caucus of women parliamentarians was able to support women's rights and gender equality, and also mobilised grassroots women to

be involved in the making of the constitution so that the concerns of gender equality are considered, and at the same time examine the budget and make sure that the budget addresses the needs of women and men.

Women leadership was demonstrated by the setting up of women's structures, which came to be known at a later stage as national women's councils. In fact, the Ministry of Gender and Women in Development first recognised a national system of women's councils immediately after the genocide, and since then, their role has been broadened. The women's councils are community structures elected at the cell level (the smallest administrative unit) by women only, and then through indirect election at each consecutive administrative level (sector, district, province). These councils work in parallel to general local councils and advance women's concerns. The ten-member councils are implicated in skills training at the grassroots level and in awareness-raising about women's rights. The representative of the women's council has the right to a reserved seat on the general local council, and hence, guaranteeing official representation of women's concerns and providing links between the two systems (Kladoumadje Nadjaldongar Celhto (3 - 5 June 2008), *ibid.*).

National women's councils give a platform to help women gaining visibility and allow women to contribute to national debate and then, influencing policy development and democratic processes of the country. As a matter of fact, they mobilise women to be involved in Gacaca courts, in decentralization, in poverty reduction processes, in fighting the HIV/AIDS pandemic and in dealing with the challenges of the 1994 genocide (National Unity and Reconciliation Commission of Rwanda, 2008: *Ibid.*). In fact, research shows that "women can influence peace and reconciliation if they are empowered to participate and taking major decisions at community, local, national and international levels" (Braddon and Foster. (eds.), 1996: 2). However, the success of the grassroots women's councils in carving out new political space was facilitated by the 2003 constitution which advocated for these structures (women's councils) to fill reserved seats for women in the Chamber of Deputies.

Mukamusoni (2002), a parliamentarian elected through the women's councils, mentions the relevance of this system in these words:

“In the history of our country and society, women could not go in public with men. Where men were, women were not supposed to talk, to show their needs. Men were to talk and think for them. So with [the women's councils], it has been a mobilization tool, it has mobilized them, it has educated [women] . . . It has brought them to some [level of] self-confidence, such that when the general elections are approaching, it becomes a topic in the women's [councils]. ‘Women as citizens, you are supposed to stand, to campaign, give candidates, support other women’. They have acquired a confidence of leadership” (Mukamusoni, 2002)

In fact, after the 1994- Rwanda, while both the government and the society at large were in disarray, the civil society played a big role, especially women organisations. Women's NGOs stepped in to fill the vacuum, offering various much-needed services to a traumatized society and contributing to the whole process of women's empowerment. On a multi-ethnic basis, women came together to re-form the umbrella organization *Pro-Femmes*, which had been reputable in 1992. This organization, which coordinated the activities of 13 women's non-governmental organization in 1992, is now an umbrella body for more than 40 women's organisations. The main role played by *Pro-femmes* in the post-1994 Rwanda has been organizing the activities of women, as well as advising the government on the key issues of women's political participation, stimulating reconciliation and run small income generating projects. A 2002 report commissioned by the US Agency for International Development (USAID) recognized the significant role *Pro- Femmes* plays in shaping public policy. The study of USAID concluded that women's NGOs are the ‘most vibrant sector of civil society in Rwanda and that ‘*Pro-Femmes* is one of the few organizations in Rwandan civil society that has taken an effective public advocacy role” (Rwanda Democracy and Governance Assessment: November 2002: 35). This environment created by *Pro-Femmes* facilitated the formation of the first women's association and cooperatives in the post-1994 Rwanda.

However, as chapter five will show, women's participation has many constraints, among them dependence on men, and lack of assets. While the women's councils are important in terms of decentralisation and grassroots involvement, lack of income is a barrier for women to use all of their potential to help the community and the country at large. Indeed, members of local women's councils are not paid, and, as they are committed to do that work on voluntary basis, they put their effort in performing their paid work and family

responsibilities. Ballington and Karam (2005) argue that the work of the councils suffers and some may be tempted to be involved in corruption (Ballington and Karam 2005: http://www.awid.org/eng/layout/set/print/content/download/51418/571545/file/WiP_inlay.pdf). Another problem faced by these women's councils is connected to the habitual linkage of women's councils with the prevailing political party. According to reports by some women local officials, in some cases, the wives of influential community leaders serve as officers of leading women's councils in their areas and challenges come when these women use the power of their husbands to intimidate community members. These women may also be the wives of political leaders. Local women officials in some areas try to remedy to this case by creating a women's confederation as overseer of all existing women's groups, which are free from party association, just to overcome alienating situations.

Looking at the situation currently on the national level, Powerley (2003) shows that women hold 54 % percent of the seats in the lower chamber of the parliament, a bigger percentage than in any other parliament worldwide, according to a tally by the Geneva-based Inter-Parliamentary Union, which represents 138 parliaments worldwide (Powerley, 2003: 24-36). The union reported in 2010 that Rwanda has come the closest to accomplish equality between men and women of any national parliament, beating the former champion Sweden. The Inter-Parliamentary Union, which advised Rwandans on how to write a "gender-sensitive" constitution, also informed that women hold 9 of 20 Senate seats, or 49 percent, and concluded that there is no other country which is achieving what Rwanda is doing to bring women into the political process (Ballington and Karam 2005: *ibid.*).

The example of Rwanda is a proof that women can shape the outcomes of the political process by applying a gender perspective to influence policy-making and governance systems in general. Taking other examples, in post-war Mozambique, where the parliament was 30 percent constituted by women, in order to give women equal rights with men in the household, a new law regulating family issues was passed in 2003, providing women with protections and rights in marriage, employment and inheritance. In Uganda, where 14 percent of parliamentary seats were reserved to women, the women's caucus effectively advanced and defended certain priorities of women, resulting in an increase in the government's budget allocations for nutrition and childhood development. Despite the important value they add - and their fundamental right to participate in post-conflict reconstruction and decision-making

- women still meet challenging obstacles to their participation (Ballington and Karam 2005: *ibid.*).

In fact, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) notes: “the continued absence of women’s voices in governance is largely due to inequitable representation and participation in institutional structures, from governments and political parties to NGOs and the private sector. However...boosting women’s political participation needs to go beyond raw numbers to encompass the complex relationship between power, poverty, and participation” (UNDP, 1999). However, although women’s participation in decision-making is a slogan in many countries, participation and power are two different things. In fact, you may participate in decision-making but without the power to influence decisions to be taken. Despite requirements that mandate public participation, institutional practices and current models of public participation from many African countries often exclude citizens from anything other than a superficial role.)

A tangible proof suggests that in reality, there is a very little distribution of influence and power in most modern societies. However, it is suitable to make a clear difference between participation, meaning being part of an activity, and power, which means a degree of authority on the activity. Second, participation research is not often based on a theoretical style. In other words, some forms of participation are often challenged as tokenistic, giving participants no power. Participation in government schemes often means no more than using the service on offer or providing inputs to resource it (Community Development Journal, 1998: <http://cdj.oxfordjournals.org/content/33/3/197.abstract>). As a matter of fact, just after Rwandan independence, when there was one woman in the parliament out of 30 men, still the ruling party’s choir called “Abanyuramatwi” were repeatedly singing “demokarasi niyo yahaye abagore agaciro” or “democracy has valued women” and this became like slogan.

This example shows that participation may be a means of indoctrination and a political tool for manipulation. Nevertheless, Huber and Shipan (2002) show that in developing countries benefits may be derived from even the weakest forms of participation, and argue that “five such forms are identified - utilization, contributions, enlistment, cooperation, and consultation - and their benefit to community development considered” (Huber and Shipan, 2002: 75)

In order to help women achieve participation in decision-making and to be considered in the development process, a Ministry of Women's Affairs (MOWA) was established in 1998 with a mission of advancing women's empowerment and to cooperate and collaborate with other ministries to make sure that gender concerns are fully part of their work. Apart from establishing special ministries for women, individual ministries in Rwanda such as the Ministry of Defence, have gender focal points that promote gender equality within the institution; and a gender desk (gender monitoring office) in every police station, from the national head office to the district police stations, was set up. On the side of women, they organised themselves and established effective coalitions across civil society, government, and parliament to push for equality in access to resources.

Although it is generally argued that education, economic power and the ability to generate resources can enable women to influence political decision-making and affect social attitudes, in many cases this does not happen. Women may generate income, but they are either uninformed of, or incapable of, changing political decision-making. In post conflict societies (and in developing nations) women's control of resources and their successful efforts in generating revenue can create a backlash among men in their community. Experience shows that if not addressed, this can result in the closure of some projects. Donors and recipients of aid must make sure that, on the one hand, income-generating programmes have a divergent women's empowerment component to help women to keep their space and work. On the other hand, they must try to identify possible barriers and overcome the risks of a backlash against women (Smith and Swanee, November 2004: Ibid.).

As a matter of fact, Tanya (1999) mentions that in Colombia, following years of women's involvement in economic development but limited influence in politics, women's organisations are now combining income-generating projects with training on political rights and empowerment and this has produced very positive results (Sanam Naraghi and Stanski , 2010: http://www.huntalternatives.org/download/41_section2.pdf). Additionally, in Sudan; women's groups and a widow's association have established catering and conference facilities to generate income. While the ownership rests in the hands of the women, the management and staff are predominantly local men who benefit from receiving salaries (Anderson, 2000: *ibid.*) Another example is Afghanistan where gender-sensitive UN personnel reached out to male tribal leaders, seeking their endorsement to initiate programs

that would generate income for women in the villages (Tanya, 1999: 89-106, cited in Smith and Swanee, November 2004: *ibid.*).

4.5.2.1 Women in post-genocide reconstruction and development: achievements and constraints

The previous point shows how the existence of women in public office has both symbolic and practical value, varying from legitimising women's voices to becoming key actors in the post-genocide reconstruction and development. Thus, although women are the survivors of violent conflict, they also bear the burden of reconstruction. For the specific case of Rwanda, women have contributed to all pillars of the stabilization and reconstruction after the 1994 genocide, and women involved in leadership during that period serve as a channel to empower women by advancing their positions in the community. Furthermore, Lindsay, Gündüz and Subedi (2009) highlights that "a growing body of research has shown that capitalizing on the activities of women peace-builders not only advances women's rights, but leads to more effective programs and, ultimately, to a more sustainable peace and development" (Lindsay, Gündüz and Subedi, March 2009: http://www.international-alert.org/pdf/LEO_Nepal.pdf).

Indeed, Tanya (1999) mentions that "economists increasingly recognize that nothing is more central to development than the economic, political and social participation and leadership of women. This is particularly true in post-conflict societies, where women often make up the majority of the population and have primary responsibility for raising the next generation" (Tanya, 1999: 86-106). This is a reality in the context of Rwanda where 54% of the population are women. A broad set of data (including the data collected from Mayaga region) show that promoting women's education and control over assets and giving them an opportunity to express their views is the cornerstone in the development process of any given country. But the most challenging issue is that most international organisations intervening in post-conflict situations may understand this reality but fail to formulate a set of policies that consistently increase women's empowerment, even in the situation where these policies do not go in the direction of other strategic objectives. Thus, national government and international organisations or actors should cooperate and collaborate to ensure that all women's potentials are exploited and developed, with special focus on technical training and

education in new technologies, and by emphasising on the employment of women in key reconstruction efforts. Despite this, women still face an uphill struggle in accessing and benefiting from post-conflict aid in these specific fields.

In many African traditional societies where both men and women are involved in armed conflicts or liberation struggle, it is a reality that the demobilised men and women meet at the workplace, and sometimes the workplace is still dominated by patriarchy. Hence, while competing for employment and control of economic assets, women are often pushed back to the kitchen at the end of a war. Failing to get a good job or to access land, some of the former women soldiers engage in illegal or socially inappropriate activities such as bar duty, beer brewing or even prostitution for economic survival, and the negative effects of that decision is the stigmatisation and abuse. On the other hand, “women may feel unable to accept formal employment because of child care and other domestic commitments, and the sheer volume of work needed to sustain a family in reduced economic circumstances may strain women’s health” (Kelkar, 1992: 14).

Hence, this case study will examine whether and how these factors have been overcome in Mayaga region cooperatives. In addition to cooperatives, women’s organisations can play an important role in helping women to surmount the constraints and challenges they face in attempting to access and benefit from reconstruction opportunities. In doing so, they can to some extent influence the national budgets and policies. To achieve this, women must be involved in the decision-making structures.

4.6 Policy on decentralization as a strategy for reconstruction

Within the last two decades, the reform of the public service has been worldwide an issue of concern to governments, their social partners and international development agencies. These reforms are at the key issue in defining the role of the State in a context of liberalisation and globalisation and of responding to challenges of the public service in terms of its efficiency and effectiveness. In the post-1994 genocide period, policies of decentralisation have been major problems in the reform process. But, “just at the point when reform policies have become more widely accepted, uncertainties have emerged about the extent to which decentralization has been adopted and the degree to which their implementation has been effective” (Bach, 2000: 135)

Decentralisation usually necessitates a change from centralised state structures to decentralised state structures with regional and district-level representation, presupposed to be better geared to reproduce people's perspectives and respond to their interests. In other words, decentralisation is a delegation of decision-making to the subunits of the government: provinces, districts and cells. Thus, the lower the level where decisions are made, the greater is the decentralisation. However, in terms of women's empowerment, Hänggi (2005) highlights that decentralization cannot be equated with democracy, increased influence and people-centred development: "decentralisation...brings the danger that power and resources will be captured by local élites or vested interest groups"(Hänggi, 2005: 351). In other words, we cannot say that decentralisation automatically leads to women's equal representation and equal participation.

The development process of developing countries has always been constrained by the pervasiveness of poor basic service delivery and poverty in rural areas. Indeed, "the failure of many rural development projects during the last three decades has led those involved to consider in more detail the factors that undermined successful outcomes. Prime among these are the issues of inadequate local capacity and the excessive centralisation of decision-making" (The integrated Sustainable Rural Development Strategy (ISRDS), 17 November 2000: <http://www.info.gov.za/otherdocs/2000/isrds.pdf>)

It is now that some developing countries (as well as Western countries) are realising that rural communities generally and women specifically, if they are empowered, can become key actors in the own development. However, experience in many African countries shows that decentralisation does not necessary empower communities to become full agents in their development. Indeed, decentralisation often undermines financial flows and institutional arrangements that jeopardize the efforts of the community in articulating and acting on its own priorities.

In other cases, the potential benefits for the rural populations are undermined by their urban counterparts. In fact, "it is clear that rural areas stand to benefit just as much, and often proportionately more than urban areas from initiatives designed to build the capacity of local governments to manage their own affairs, and empower local communities to take responsibility for their own local development programmes" (The integrated Sustainable Rural Development Strategy (ISRDS), 17 November 2000: *ibid.*).

The Southern province of Rwanda (which hosts the Mayaga region) was created in the context of the decentralisation policy adopted in post-1994 Rwanda. According to a report from MINALOC (2007), the Rwanda Decentralisation Strategic Framework (RDSF) has been initiated to lead the implementation of the policy of decentralisation in the country as mentioned in the 2000 Policy Paper (Government of Rwanda /Ministry of Health, July 2009: http://www.moh.gov.rw/index.php?option=com_docman&task=doc_download&gid=98&Itemid=14). Moreover, the report shows that RDSF is used as the overall framework of reference for potential interventions towards decentralisation in Rwanda. As far as the collaboration between the Government and its national and international development partners is concerned, decentralisation needs to be “a transversal process that imposes itself as the principal focus of governance reform, the designated motor for the coherency of governance” (MINALOC, 2007: 8). Additionally, this strategy is meant to support the Rwandan Vision 2020 and other development goals aimed at poverty eradication.

Moreover, this process of decentralisation implemented in the Southern province (and other provinces) was initiated as an instrument to accomplish three main objectives: professional, useful and responsible service delivery, poverty reduction and the promotion of good governance. In view of this, an appropriate policy was formulated to implement and achieve these objectives to help the local community to fight poverty by being involved in planning and management of their development process. However, one can also add that it draws lessons from the period before the 1994 genocide, a period of bad leadership which was characterised by highly centralised governmental structures and lack of citizen participation in leadership and development.

The decentralisation process is being implemented in three consecutive phases. The first phase (2000-2005) was focusing on democratic and community development structures. To make the functioning of these structures useful, a number of legal, institutional and policy reforms were initiated in connection with the promotion of the democratic elections. The second phase (2006-2010) put emphasis on consolidating national priorities like Vision 2020 and enhancing effectiveness in service delivery to communities. The third phase of implementation (2011-2015) is supposed to advance and support the achievements of the first two phases. In phase three, multi-sectoral decentralisation at community level will be empowered and a strategy of reinforcing partnerships between public sector and non-state

organizations is set up (Republic of Rwanda: Ministry of Local Government, Good Governance, Community Development and Social Affairs/MINALOC, August 2007: http://www.minaloc.gov.rw/IMG/pdf_RDSF-10.08.07-final_for_publishing.pdf)

The Southern province and its structures (like other provinces) were created with a specific role to play. Rwanda is now constituted by two layers of government (central and local) and of six administrative entities: the Central Government, the Province or “Intara”, the District or “Akarere”, the Sector or “Umurenge”, the Cell or “Akagari” and the Village or “Umudugudu” (see map 1, p.93) and these structures were reshaped according to the 2006 reform and operating in a complementary manner. The central government level being to formulate policies, the local government has the role of implanting these policies, and providing an avenue for citizen voice and accountability. In other words:

“ the Province is responsible for coordinating district development planning with national policies and programs, supervising implementation of the national policy in the districts within the Province, coordinating governance issues in the Province, as well as monitoring and evaluation. Kigali City is responsible for coordinating the district development plans within its boundaries, strategic planning for urban development in Kigali, and monitoring and evaluation” (Republic of Rwanda: Ministry of Local Government, Good Governance, Community Development and Social Affairs/MINALOC, August 2007: *ibid*).

4.6.1 Broad advantages and disadvantages of decentralization

On the one hand, Ali (2002) shows that decentralization provides the local government at the lower level with vital experience in making decisions and that “without such experience, local government structures would be ill-prepared to make decisions when they are promoted into higher level positions” (Ali, 2002: 235-243). In fact, the local government generally has more detailed and up to date information about local conditions than the central government. Therefore the decisions of the local government structures are often based on better information.

In view of the above, while taking decisions, the local government may lack relevant information on a matter and thus missing the fully understanding of it. But, even though the central government typically has not enough information on the daily functioning of the local government; they usually have more information about the country as a whole and should

have a better understanding of the country's strategy. Moreover, the local government may have objectives that are different from the objectives of the central government; for example, while the former may be more interested in increasing the sizes of their departments, the latter looks at different issues concerning the country in a broader way.

To some degree, this problem can be overcome by designing performance evaluation systems that motivate leaders both on central and local government levels to make decisions that are in the best interests of the country. Ali (2000) makes it clear that in a strongly decentralised organization, it may be more difficult to effectively spread innovative ideas, as “someone in one part of the organisation may have a relevant idea that would benefit other parts of the organisations, but without strong central direction the idea may not be shared with, and adopted by other parts of the organization” (Ali, 2002: 235-243)

4.6.2 Specific disadvantages and advantages of decentralisation for women

i. Negative effects of decentralization on the process of women’s empowerment

Despite its intention to devolve power to local governments, the decentralisation policy does not make details on delegating power to the community. It is missing clear accountability methods for the people to control their representatives and it also lacks clear implementing and supporting regulations which creates controversy in the implementation. This is an important issue if local government is to be accountable to the community. With regard to women’s empowerment, despite the policy on women’s empowerment in Rwanda, decentralization does not work in a gender-neutral framework. Assuming that decentralization works in a gender-neutral framework is dangerous for the realization of gender equity in Rwanda (Ikenberry, *ibid.* p.295). The persistence of traditional power structures on the local level in terms of gender relations is not to be underestimated. The concept of “Nyampinga” seen in chapter two still persists in rural areas while in urban areas it is no longer relevant. In other words, there is a juxtaposition of traditional and local government leaders’ attitudes towards gender relations. The argument is that traditional leaders still uphold discriminatory customs which are many times against the policies of local government leaders. However, such customs are regulated by local government, especially those which fuel gender inequality and other social unbalances, under the guise of traditions or culture.

The influence of traditional leadership at local level, and the way this leadership influences or jeopardises the implementation of government policies, cannot be ignored. Traditional leaders are not elected officials, but hereditary rulers. Chiefs and kings are selected through rules of succession, which is incompatible with the democratic ideal. Moreover, as it is the tribal lineage that produces the future chief, the patriarchal systems often prevent women from holding the highest traditional offices. Hence, at a certain extent, these practices of traditional leaders jeopardise the process of democracy at local level and the principles and policies of women's empowerment.

In view of this, there is a need for additional measures (like affirmative action- and awareness-raising campaigns or clear juridical provisions) so that decentralisation does not deepen the type of local power structures that have a tendency to exclude women. In the context of Rwanda, the degree of the achievement of decentralisation in empowering women generally, however, is influenced by the political environment of the country. Thus, Rwanda implemented a system of quotas, giving a chance to women to participate in structures of decision-making at a rate of at least 30%. Hence, for community projects to be sustainable, the involvement of women is precondition. In fact, women in Rwanda are usually very involved in local community projects, mainly projects in connection with health care and water provision. Even though women are often involved in these projects, local elites, who are predominantly men, maintain ownership of and control over these projects. This can generate conflict and result in decisions which are contrary to women's benefit. (Sanamnaraghi Anderlini and Judy El-Bushra (2010): http://www.huntalternatives.org/download/39_post_conflict.pdf)

In reality, some local communities in Mayaga region and in Rwanda as a whole are not always democratic, and they frequently resist change. Haddenius and Ugla (1996) mention that "local structures are less amenable to change than are higher levels of political organizations" (Haddenius & Ugla, 1996: 78). Indeed, local communities in Mayaga region are in one of the rural areas of Rwanda that frequently resists some reforms or policies initiated by the central government, especially when they understand the changes as threatening to the traditional norms, traditions and structures that have served their interests. For instance, when the central government attempted to deal with the issue of polygamy which is prevalent in Mayaga region, it was not welcomed by the patriarchal rural communities that benefit from polygamy.

Although women in Rwanda are involved in political structures as elected representatives through legislative change, due to the gender inequalities in Rwandan society, some women still experience bureaucratic regulations that are against their interests, and may be excluded as equal community members by patriarchal structures and processes.

Challenging the inadequacy of representation in justifying women's reality and struggle at the local level, Grant & Tancred (1992) argued for the 'dual unequal representation' as more capable of explaining the persistent gender subordination in organization. Dual unequal representation views gender inequality in state bureaucracy as ensured both through the relatively powerless position of the units that allegedly represent women's issues, and through the relatively lower positions of women who serve in other branches and departments of state (Grant & Tancred (1992). On the other side, one can see bureaucracy even within women's organizations where work is done by some women specialists, and who cannot easily reach women beneficiaries at the grassroots levels. In that context, these bureaucratic women implement rules and allow decisions made at high levels to be executed consistently by all lower levels, sometimes without flexibility.

While some international NGOs working in the field of gender/gender and development are meant to be independent, in reality it is a difficult task, because they must receive funding from their governments, from other institutions, businesses and/or from private sources. In this way, they fail to follow the strategic rules of grassroots women's organizations, and in some cases a conflict emerges between funders and the project beneficiaries. Other criticisms of this sort of bureaucracy range from pointing out that only a small percentage of money goes to women in need, with a lot of money going to recover costs, and some even being used to pay very high salaries of these women bureaucrats. This reality was confirmed by a woman working in Care International in the Southern province, who preferred to be anonymous.¹¹

If we take another example, that of elections, some examples show that cultural issues obstruct women from competing in elections. In Sri Lanka for example, during the period of 1991-1997, the already insignificant involvement of women in decision-making structures reduced because of the intertwined issues such as: women's unwillingness to compete with men of different political parties, the exclusive nature of the present system of fair

¹¹ Interview with a key informant , an anonymous woman working in CARE International on April 19th. 2009

representation, and cultural context where women are unenthusiastic to participate in conflicting political situations (The Politics of Gender and Decentralisation in Indonesia, 2007: <http://www.policy.hu/siahaan/researchpaper3.htm>). These factors are not peculiar to Sri Lanka, as it is the same case in some rural areas of Rwanda.

Based on their study of several developing countries, one can mention a number of major factors which explain the marginalisation of women in local government (The Politics of Gender and Decentralisation in Indonesia, 2007: *ibid.*):

- In some cases, there is isolation and lack of support for women to get involved in local government by some men who still think in a patriarchal perspective. Hence, women experience segregation while attempting to enter in local government structures.
- When involved in the government women organs, women experience conflict between their family obligations and their public duties. This conflict pushes some women to divorce, childlessness and other factors that fuel the gender divisions of labor.
- Lack of experience and recognition, and lack of support from their male colleagues jeopardise the success of women involved in local government in advancing gender equity.

To illustrate some of the above constraints, in the context of Rwandan local government structures, the election of village community representatives is mostly supposed to be attended by at least two-third of the head of households who, according to the patriarchal thinking that dominates the rural community, are men. In this context, these patriarchal meetings aren't insensitive to gender concerns. In some rural areas of Rwanda where traditional patriarchal values persist, women's needs and interests are not guaranteed or protected, whether in election or in issues related to livelihoods. Whether in Mayaga region or in other parts of the country, some of these patriarchal values assume that women are prohibited from being outside their homes in the late hours, except if they are with their husbands. This can be a very big barrier for women to participate in some sub-committees within the local government structures, for the simple reason that men don't allow their wives or girls to attend local meetings organized at night for electing such sub-committees. In terms

of livelihoods, if women are not allowed (under the name of culture) to go outside their homes during the night, this means that they cannot do any job that requires working night hours. While these rules prohibit women from going outside the home and adopting livelihood strategies during night hours, they do not describe how to compensate for the loss of income that women need for their family's survival.

The negative constraints of decentralization on the process of women's empowerment and their participation in decision-making are mostly political, psycho-social, and economic.

ii. Political

The success of Rwanda in involving women in the country's management consists in the system adopted in elections. In fact, researchers and experts have concluded that "removing political and institutional barriers is essential for promoting women's engagement in governance" (Shvedova, 2002:75). Additionally, unfavorable electoral systems is on the major political challenges facing women in many countries. A history of male-dominated leadership in politics and governmental institutions is another challenge. In fact, the case of Rwanda shows that in the post-conflict situation, the type of electoral system chosen can influence the representation of women. Indeed, women have advanced most effectively in the proportional representation (PR) system in Rwanda, where seats are divided among parties based on the percentage of votes won. As of 2004, of 182 countries that hold elections, "women averaged 8.5 percent of members of parliament in majoritarian systems, 11.3 percent in combined systems, and 15.4 percent in PR systems. In fact, 13 of the top 15 countries with the highest representation of women utilise PR systems, averaging 34.7 percent women in their parliaments" (Ballington and Matland: 2004). However, the overall success of women's political participation in Rwanda is due to a combination of PR and constituency voting systems.

iii. Social and Psychological

The thinking that women are not fit for participation in political structures remains a big threat for women to engage in post-conflict leadership. To some extent, this discrimination and marginalization can be seen in the attitudes of men and women, and in some cases, it is institutionalised. In most countries in the post-conflict situation, UN Women's Approach (

1999) highlights that women do not benefit equally from the access to education or training as men, nor have they been given a chance to be involved in leadership roles in the public or private sector during peacetime (UN Women's Approach, 1999: http://womenwarpeace.org/webfm_send/99/1?).

The above gap demonstrates an alarming obstacle to women's political participation and decision-making. In some cases, male leaders use the lack of education and training for women as an excuse to avoid promoting them, and also men subjectively argue that women themselves lack confidence and choose not to engage. However, it is a reality that in many post-conflict societies those who hold power are former military leaders, and military institutions are almost always male-dominated, this also becomes another challenge for women who are willing to participate in decision-making structures.

iv. Economic

Due to their household burden, women are deprived from participating in post-conflict governance. In the context of Rwanda recovering from genocide, there are different cases of widows who act as the principal breadwinners as well as caretakers for their children, the elderly, and extended family members. In this context, "it must be recognized that it is difficult for women to participate in political life when their major concern is survival and they have no choice but to spend much of their time trying to fulfill the basic needs of families" (Shvedova, 2002: *ibid.*). Shvedova (2002) indicates that "this phenomenon is confirmed by research showing that educated and economically independent women are more likely to enter politics than other women" (*ibid.*).

Hence, in addition to the challenges mentioned in the previous section, economic factor is another barrier for women to be involved in decision-making. As a matter of fact, during the electoral campaign, many women may not afford the pay the budget of the campaign. Even in the situation where they are affiliated with political parties, women are often responsible for their own transportation and the production and dissemination of campaign materials. Therefore, male candidates might have had jobs or other financial opportunities during peacetime, uphold networks of possible funders and business associates who can financially help them in their campaign (UN Women's approach, 1999: *ibid.*). In view of the above, one

can state that women are vulnerable to obstacles or constraints from both the society and local government. In spite of some diversity within the Mayaga region, there is a striking similarity of the pattern that impedes women's participation in public decision; for example, women are invited to community meetings, but when the meetings take a long time, women go back home before they finish, just to make sure that there is something to put on the table that night and to care for the cattle. It is in this context that women's organizations at the grassroots level together with the civil society tried in different ways to address traditional and cultural practices that limit women's freedom to participate in decision-making.

Thus, gender- focussed NGOs and the civil society at large have engaged in policy advocacy to influence the government to meet the commitment to address traditional and cultural values that are against women's interest and concerns. However, in many cases; the idea of improving economically, socially and politically the lives of the grassroots women becomes rhetoric and fruitless. That is, women can't effectively participate decision making and control economic resources, and have their rights valued and respected. One can say that there is a big work to be done at the grassroots level to see the quality of the life of women improved. As highlighted in chapter two, this shows once again how good policy formulation does not necessarily mean a successful policy implementation. This is confirmed by Hamadeh-Banerjee (2000) who argues that, "although in the majority of cases, as noted, they have specific policies on gender mainstreaming and the empowerment of women, these policies often are not effectively implemented at the field level" (Hamadeh-Banerjee, 2000: 12)

4.6.3 Positive implications of decentralisation on the life of women

In Rwanda there are women's councils, from the national level to the village level (Powley, 2005). Despite some limitations of the achievement of these councils at the grassroots level, a key informant interviewee showed that their existence in the midst of the frequently gendered bureaucracy at the local level has benefited women in Mayaga region. The key informant argued that, undeniably, the existence of women in public office has both symbolic and practical value, ranging from legitimising women's voices to becoming role models in inspiring women to engage in local government. In fact, considering the struggle women's councils face, by providing support for women's demands within the political system, women's councils have contributed in making women more visible and audible and

sometimes even enhancing women's capability in changing decisions. The key informant who represents women's council in Ruhango district showed that through these councils, women learnt their way around the system and so are empowered to use it to benefit themselves and their groups.¹²

Another positive point is that by cooperating with women working within local government, women's advocacy organizations such as HAGURUKA and the Women's Network in Rwanda have found access to policy making arenas, and have helped to advance women's political agenda. The ways this cooperation works to pursue women's interests is by directly recruiting organisations' leaders into policy networks, or by making networks with relatively influential and efficient society-wide actors. Since some women get the opportunity to be involved in the decision-making within local government may, one of the first tasks could to indirectly help to promote the fellow women's interests by creating opportunities and assets to groups and individuals outside of the state to give them a chance to participate in policy formulation and implementation, and by mobilizing state funds to organisations concerned with policies that promote women's status, or by contacting and inviting women's experts, activists, and/or representatives from feminist associations into state place of policy making (*The Politics of Gender and Decentralisation in Indonesia, 2007, ibid.*). Local government women's councils in some areas benefit women by promoting equality, by trying to change policy and by endeavoring to shift public resources (RISD, 1999: 57).

Furthermore, from a feminist view point, decentralisation will bring politics closer to local community while at the same time may help shift the balance between women and men by providing enough power and favorable opportunity for conducting transformation at the local level. The assumption of this argument advocates that valuing the importance of local government functions to women's roles and needs, women are supposed to be involved in politics at the grassroots level, and to have freedom to concern themselves with the type of decision initiated in their local environment. In fact, since women are familiar with daily neighbourhood affairs, they become effective agents of change in suggesting relevant and useful ideas in solving problems at the local level. On the other hand, the fact that the work is local and part-time, characteristic of local government elected offices, contributes to the accessibility of these offices to women.

¹² Interview with a key informant, an anonymous woman who represents women's councils in Ruhango district (interview held on March 17th, 2009)

4.7 Policies to counter gender-based violence and its legacy

On the overall situation in the country, a report from the Rwandan National police (RNP) indicates that 714 defilement cases were registered in the first six months of 2010 compared to 2,033 recorded in 2006. 150 rape cases were registered in the same period, down from 403 registered five years ago. The two crimes were higher in 2007 when they increased by 19 percent (2421 cases) and 27.5 percent (514 cases) respectively (RNP Report, 2010: 6, cited in New Times / Kigali: <http://www.newtimes.co.rw/>). In view of this, although Rwanda is now internationally prominent in terms of women's empowerment, and gender-based violence has been significantly reduced as a result of government intervention, gender-based violence can still be seen in different places including the Mayaga region which is the case study of this research. However, in the years 2008, 2009 and 2010 in Rwanda, the cases of GBV gradually decreased due to both increased community awareness and improved synergy and coordination between the police, prosecution, medical, civil society, local leadership and the community for improved service delivery in regard to survivors' access to justice (RNP Report, 2010: *ibid.*). Chapter five will also show how cooperatives played a remarkable role in decreasing GBV in their households and the community at large.

The consequences of GBV are obvious (HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases, unwanted pregnancies, physical and psychological trauma, etc.), but its causes remain ill-defined. Some studies carried out on SGBV emphasise the description and condemnation of the violence and the aspect of the violation of the human rights of women (Panafrikan Health Organisation (Fact Sheet: Gender, Ethnicity, and Health Unit: 2003): www.paho.org/English/ad/ge/Viol-HIV_FS0705.pdf).

To illustrate this, let us take one example of a study carried out in four districts in Rwanda, two of them being in Mayaga region. This study on GBV in the post- 1994 Rwanda collected data on cases of violence and assaults faced by women both in public spaces and in family and marital relationships. The study investigates the successive actions that survivors have taken, and make evaluation of the role that different stakeholders can play to eradicate GBV. The assessment's qualitative and quantitative data has helped UNIFEM and its partners to amplify their knowledge and understanding GBV and to set up well-targeted strategies and interventions to overcome or fight such kind of violence in Rwanda (UNIFEM, 2008: http://www.unifem.org/materials/item_detail.php?ProductID=146).

From the above study, it was found that “both literate and illiterate women are targets of violence and that the majority of the targeted group is between 18-34 years old (61%) followed by those between 34-39 years (28%)” (Anderson, 2000: 448). During the 2006 Baseline Survey on GBV, survivors gave their views – some arguing that GBV is still there while others mention that it has stopped. Survivors revealed. Moreover, the perpetrators had not necessarily consumed alcohol or drugs before the assault.

It was found during the research that the largest group of survivors (38%) immediately talked about the assault to someone, while 36% did not tell anybody and some survivors informed someone after several days or months (UNIFEM, 2008: *ibid.*). However, while it is in some cases risky to reveal the perpetrator of the violence, it is riskier to keep silence as it may encourage the perpetrator to continue the behavior. This was the same case just after the 1994 genocide, where women could not talk about their abuse; later, after being found HIV positive, they were helped by some women’s organizations to talk publicly about their situation.

A Baseline Study on GBV confirms the earlier argument that the Mayaga region was one of the rural areas in Rwanda where HIV/AIDS and gender-based violence were high, between 1988 and 1996 (MINISANTE, 1997: 38). According to the previous discussions, it is clear that gender-based violence was partly connected to the many cases of women raped during the 1994 genocide, but it happened even before the 1994 genocide, mostly due to a culture of gender discrimination and economic dependence of women on men as mentioned earlier. Apart from the role played by the Rwandan government in overcoming gender-based violence, civil society in Rwanda has also played a good role. However, while appreciating the role played by some women’s organisations like HAGURUKA (a Non-Governmental Organization for the protection of the rights of women and children), AVEGA-Agahozo (the April Genocide Widows’ organisation), Rwanda Women’s Network, ARCT-Ruhuka (a Trauma Counseling Association), Pro-Femme Twese Hamwe (a group of 41 women’s associations presenting itself as a platform, an exchange and consultation framework promoting women’s development as well as effective and efficient participation in national development), in fighting GBV, still the victims need to be at the forefront in this struggle.

Both men and women must work together if a solution to gender-based violence is to be achieved. Focusing only on women would reinforce the stereotype that men do not have a responsibility to help fight gender-based violence. In reality, men and women must work together to achieve real and sustainable change in the society in terms of gender-based violence. As seen above, Rwanda has some strong laws that address gender-based violence. Nevertheless, they are just words on paper unless people believe in the laws and put them into practice. Local knowledge and a desire for change at the community level are vital if a reduction in gender-based violence is to be achieved. This research will explore other forms of empowerment of women victims of violence, and whether cooperatives have played a role in this regard.

The National Police of Rwanda have put in place a strategy for fighting against violence and crime in general, and gender-based violence in particular. The first of these is commonly referred to as 'Community Policing'. It is a philosophy fostering and supporting the implementation of strategies aimed at fighting the causes of crime and social disturbances through the resolution of problems using the police in partnership with communities (public, elected members at all levels, government, and other organisations) (MINALOC, 2007: 27 - 49).). Moreover, at every police station, from the grassroots to the national level, there is a gender desk which sets up a free call line where abused women/girls can call the police at any time, twenty-four hours of the day.

Apart from the 'community-policing' and other initiatives taken by the national police, the government of Rwanda set up laws, policies and strategies to eradicate sexual and gender based violence specifically, and improve women's empowerment generally (UNIFEM, 2008):

- The National Gender Policy falls within the framework of the sustainable and equitable development programme adopted by the Government of Rwanda. Its objective is to ensure that, in all the development fields, women and men have the same opportunities of access to resources, goods and services as well as to the control of the same, and that their specific needs are taken into account in the entire development process;
- The National Policy on Violence against women and children was drafted by the Ministry of Gender and Women Promotion (MIGEPROF) in Rwanda and approved

by the parliament. Its objective is the prevention and eradication of all the forms of violence against women and children in Rwanda

- The National Policy on Violence criminalises sexual and domestic violence and facilitated the integration of GBV services into health services.
- The Draft Law on the prevention and repression of gender-based violence (under adoption by the Rwandan Parliament) specifies that gender-based violence is a crime and clarifies the penalties;
- The Draft Law on reproductive health governs sexual violence in general and violence against children and minors in particular;
- The 2001 Law on children's rights and protection against violence. This law is dated 2001 and deals with the violence inflicted on children in general, and gender-based violence in particular. It lays particular emphasis on sexual violence against children.

4.8 Empowerment of women through cooperatives

4.8.1 Cooperatives in Africa and around the world

MacPherson (1996) defines cooperative as “an autonomous association of persons - both women and men given an equal access to its membership - united voluntarily to meet their common economic, social and cultural needs and aspirations through a jointly-owned and democratically-controlled economic or business enterprise” (MacPherson, 1996: 77). Similarly, Sperling and Steiner (1992) view a cooperative company as “an enterprise owned by an association of natural or legal persons with the objective to satisfy their common needs (accessibility to products or services, selling their products and services, employment, etc.)” (Sperling and Steiner, 1992: 47).

The system of cooperatives is used in developing as well as in developed countries. Chambers (1983) indicates that cooperatives in Africa were developed in the 1960s in East Africa but were later proved to be inefficient as they were dominated by the larger farmers at the cost of the small farmers and exploited the poor people and women (Chambers, 1983). Taking the example of the Cooperative Facility for Africa (Coop Africa), it is a programme that was established to promote cooperative development in Africa as a means of poverty eradication. So far Coop Africa covers 9 countries in Eastern and Southern Africa and has promoted an enabling legal policy environment which has resulted in effective cooperative

unions, in the two regions. Today, over 100 million jobs have been generated by cooperatives around the world, with the highest attributed to the agricultural sector. This is mainly because the sector is a major source of income and employment in many countries; these organisations have therefore been very influential in providing jobs in rural communities (Nambi, 22 July 2008: <http://www.allafrica/stories/200807220117.html>). In some African countries, the organisations are the second most important employer immediately after the Government. Statistics on cooperative organizations indicates that by 1996, farming cooperatives had employed about 100 000 people in South Africa and 42 000 in Morocco (Nambi, 2 July 2008: *ibid.*).

Cooperatives contribute to economic growth worldwide, represent a significant number of jobs and are economically important in a great number of countries for the supply of food products, housing, financial services, and a full range of services to the consumer (Bem, 1983: 225-246). In other words, the importance of the cooperatives is justified, be it for the developing countries or the developed countries, and Donnell and Hall (1980) makes it clear that “not any sector of economic activities is closed to them” (Donnell and Hall, 1980: 33). In most West African countries including Burkina Faso and Ivory Coast, the farming cooperatives are the most important producers of fruits and vegetables supplying the domestic market, and they ensure 77% of the cotton production (FAO, 1995: 19). In USA, in 1998, 33% of the agricultural market was covered by cooperatives, and the cooperatives of rural power supply were supplying more than 50% of the electric networks, providing electricity to more than 25 million people within 46 States. Moreover, Saludcoop (health co-op) of Colombia is the 2nd largest employer in the country; while 1 in 5 Kenyans is a member of a co-op, and 20 million Kenyans directly or indirectly derive their livelihoods from cooperatives. Also 40% of Canadians and 40% of Americans were members of at least one co-operative which shows once again how people value cooperatives (Chavez, 30 April 2003: <http://www.un.org/Docs/ecosoc/meetings/hl2003/RT4%20Chavez.pdf>)

Indeed, the cooperative is recognized as a legal form of a private enterprise, owned exclusively by its members who take the risk to establish it, to benefit from it and to bear its losses. By stimulating the production and the fair distribution of wealth among its members, it contributes to the improvement of community life, conditions and welfare. It constitutes a form of enterprise capable to succeed even at the most basic level and among the poorest populations.

A cooperative has a purpose and direction, which is to meet the common economic, social and cultural needs and aspirations of its members; a set of universal principles and values, encapsulated as promoting a democratic management of the organization and an equitable distribution of its benefits; leadership and membership, who have equal powers in the affairs of the organization with a “one member-one vote” policy; organizational structure, systems and policies, i.e. members - both women and men - are obliged to provide equitable contributions to the required capital of the economic enterprise, and to equitably gain from its benefits; technology, which is the establishment and management of an economic enterprise; and financial and other resources to which all members contribute (Sarri and Trichopoulou, 2005: 24-36).

As an economic organization, a cooperative intends to provide economic benefits to its members. Unlike other business organizations, however, its main purpose is not profit for profit sake, but service to its members. This means that cooperatives seek profits. But this gaining of profits is not the end goal of the cooperative. Rather, the provision and enhancement of services that become possible because of the attained profits is the ultimate goal. Thus, the business is run not with a capitalistic orientation, but primarily for the welfare of its members. In addition, members of a cooperative “meet their common economic, social and cultural needs” (Sarri and Trichopoulou, 2005: 29). This part of the definition emphasizes that cooperatives are organized by members for their individual and mutual benefit. Most of them exist primarily to meet economic purposes, but they have social and cultural goals as well. Roca (1998) adds that, by “social” is meant the meeting of social goals, such as the provision of health services or child care. Such activities must be conducted in an economic way so that they provide the kinds of services that benefit members” (Roca, 1998:39-61). Cooperatives may also embrace cultural goals in keeping with member concerns and wishes: for example, assisting in the promotion of a national culture, promoting peace, sponsoring sports and cultural activities, and improving relations within the community.

Members needs may be singular and limited, they may be diverse, they may be social and cultural as well as purely economic, but, whatever the needs, they are the central purpose for which the cooperative exists. The cooperative is a “jointly-owned and democratically-controlled enterprise” (Roca, 1998:39-61). This phrase emphasizes that within cooperatives,

control is distributed among members on a democratic basis. The dual characteristics of ownership and democratic control are particularly important in differentiating cooperatives from other kinds of organizations, such as capital-controlled or government-controlled firms. Wortman (1990) indicates that each cooperative is also an “enterprise” in the sense that it is an organized entity, normally functioning in the market place; it must, therefore, strive to serve its members efficiently and effectively (Wortman, 1990: 329-344).

Nevertheless, the term cooperative has a bad reputation in many developing countries, especially in those where in the past they were controlled by the State (Ethiopia, Guinea, Madagascar, Mali, Sudan, Tanzania, Vietnam, Rwanda) and where the membership was obligatory, meaning a membership in name but not in substance. The members consider that the cooperatives are a “state business” and often ignore their rights because they have never had the possibility to exercise them. In that situation, members do not have a good opinion of the cooperatives as they consider that they do not benefit from their membership, as they are not led by their own policies, but by the government’s.

4.8.2 Cooperatives in the Rwandan context

As will be detailed below, cooperatives existed before the new 2007 policy on cooperatives. Before the new policy, in the period between 1994 and 2007, cooperatives were working in an emergency situation, that of the post-genocide environment. They were not called cooperatives, but associations. There were no rigid rules for starting an association, and in most cases, it was found that some associations were constituted by family members. Others were ‘ghost’ associations, only created for applying for funds in the emergency period. You could also find associations exclusively created by genocide survivor widows, or genocide survivor children. As Rwanda moved from the emergency period to one of more sustainable development, associations aimed at income generating projects changed names and took the name of cooperatives, under the new policy. In this situation, everyone who accepts to be bound by the internal rules of the cooperative can be a member; regardless of his/her gender, religion or marital status.

4.8.3 Historical background of cooperatives in Rwanda

Cooperatives in Rwanda started in the 1940s under the Belgian colonialists. The Belgian government released a decree that allowed cooperatives to be instituted as economic entities with a legal framework in Rwanda. Many associations and pre-cooperatives were formed at that time, when the power to issue renewable contracts to any cooperative that wished to operate, was in the hands of the local administrators. Many even operated without licenses as there was no serious enforcement of clear criteria for operation. At independence in 1962, Rwanda had 8 registered cooperatives, among them SOMUKI and GEORWANDA. The first attempt to institutionalize cooperatives in Rwanda began with the enactment of the Co-operative Ordinance 1949 that operated until the current law No.31/1988 was enacted on 12th October 1988 (MINICOFIN, 2007: 3).

In the beginning, the cooperative movement in Rwanda was started as a tool for promoting colonial government. The interest of colonial government was to get resources from Rwanda for the development of their own countries and then the priority was to run some cooperatives, most of them in the field of mining. After independence in 1962, the government of Rwanda used cooperatives as instruments of implementation of its policies and plans, thus becoming a tool for politicians.

This “developmental state”¹³ and top-down approach from both the colonial state and the independent Rwandan state weakened cooperatives in different ways. As a negative outcome, although the government invested a lot of resources in cooperatives, most eventually collapsed because they lacked clear policies and strategies and the spirit of self-help among their members. Another consequence of the “developmental state” approach, as from 1974 to 1990, this system could be seen in Rwanda to the extent that even cooperatives were imposed by the government in the form of rural projects. In the same way, some donors introduced the culture of dependency by conditioning external assistance to the formation of

¹³ Developmental state, or hard state, is a term used by international political economy scholars to refer to the phenomenon of state-led macroeconomic planning in East-Asia in the late twentieth century. In this model of capitalism (sometimes referred to as state development capitalism), the state has more independent, or autonomous, political power, as well as more control over the economy. A development state is characterised by having strong state intervention, as well as extensive regulation and planning. The term has subsequently been used to describe countries outside East Asia which satisfy the criteria of a developmental state (see Leftwich Adrian. 1994. *The Development State*, Working Paper No.6, New York: University of New York)

cooperatives and other forms of associations. Hence, some people were tempted to run superficial cooperatives, just for the sake of getting money from donors (MINICOFIN, *ibid.*p.4).

In post-1994 Rwanda, the government took a decision to consider cooperatives as a strong poverty eradication tool. At this time measures were put in place, to allow only strong and viable cooperatives that can improve the social welfare of the population. The government of Rwanda views cooperatives as a potential vehicle through which the cooperative members can create employment and expand access to income-generating activities, develop their business potential, including entrepreneurial and managerial capacities through education and training, increase savings and investment, and improve social well-being with special emphasis on gender equality, housing, education, health care and community development. Today, co-operatives are the leading employment creation and poverty reduction strategy that Rwanda has embarked on (Develtere and Polleti, eds, 2008: 73).

4.8.4 Policy of cooperatives in Rwanda

The inefficiency of the cooperative organisations in Rwanda necessitated the formulation of a comprehensive policy since there was not one previously. The absence of a policy framework in the country invited a profuse of experiments, problems and confusions like equating associations to cooperatives and providing unsustainable foundations for the establishment and growth of cooperatives in the country (MINICOFIN, *ibid.* p.9). The cooperative promotion policy represents the launch pad for a vitally important transitional phase for cooperatives to begin to operate as they should. Indeed, the presence of a cooperative policy with clearly defined goals, objectives and strategies is likely to minimize deviation from internationally set standards and thus make it possible for cooperatives to be managed in accordance with cooperative principles and practices (*ibid.*). The cooperative values and principles defined in the policy highlight that: (1) cooperatives must be private businesses organizations – not public organizations; (2) cooperatives must be self-help organizations, (3) cooperatives must be run in a free and democratic manner; (4) cooperatives must grow and be a model for decentralisation (Göler von Ravensburg, 2009: 29).

From 2007, the government of Rwanda set up the Co-operative Task Force which was instituted to promote co-operative formation. A policy was also drafted to regulate the

formation and institutional framework of the cooperative organizations. Given the fact that the establishment of cooperative organisations aimed at empowering citizens economically, cooperatives became a tool and strategy of fighting poverty. According to the Ministry of Trade and Commerce's strategy document (MINICOM, *ibid*), a Cooperative Company is an enterprise owned by an association with natural or legal persons whose objectives are to satisfy their common needs. As a way of satisfying or meeting the common needs of their members, cooperatives open channels of quick accessibility to products and services thus uplifting the status and wellbeing of people.

Setting up a Co-operative Task Force demonstrated that the government of Rwanda has a very positive attitude towards cooperatives. Mainly, the support consists of the formulation of policy and the availability of infrastructure. In terms of financial capital, the government also plays the role of facilitation between micro-financiers and cooperatives, as the government considers the cooperatives as full partners in the effort of alleviating poverty. To harmonize and coordinate the interventions in that sector, it was decided to design a national policy of promoting cooperatives and to gather in a unique document the strategies chosen and the priority activities retained for the years 2006-2008 (MINALOC, 2007: 26).

The key conditions required by the law to establish a cooperative are as follows: (1) basic conditions: a minimum of 7 people and share capital fully subscribed and paid; (2) the constitutive act should include: the designation of the founders members, the name of the cooperative company, the registered office and the geographic location, the purpose and the category, the minimum share capital amount, the number and the nominal value of shares, the number of the shares of each founder member, the organs and their mode of designation, the duration of the company, and the starting and the end of each financial year; (3) the ministerial authorisation: once the formalities mentioned above are completed, the cooperative addresses a letter to the minister in charge of cooperatives, requesting from him authorization. This letter is addressed through the Major of the cooperative registry office and a copy is reserved for the governor and for the concerned District Court. For feedback, cooperatives wait for at least two weeks.

4.8.5 Cooperatives in a gender relations perspective

Just like other African countries, women in Rwanda constitute the majority of the poor - especially in the rural areas. The government under MINICOM implemented a policy of organizing the women in generating their own income, especially through weaving, knitting, tailoring and embroidery, among other skills. In many cases such services or products offered by these cooperatives would be unavailable if members acted alone. This implies that individual income increases as members benefit from each other, thus lowering poverty levels (MINICOM, 2007).

Apart from individual benefits, there is no doubt about the role of women's cooperatives in transforming the rural economy. As will be highlighted in chapter seven, most of these cooperatives are involved in rural agriculture. The strengths and positive side of the cooperatives is that they are based on the values of self-help, self-responsibility, democracy, equality, equity and solidarity. In the tradition of their founders, cooperative members believe in the ethical values of honesty, openness, social responsibility and caring for others (MacPherson, 1996). The values of self-help and self-responsibility connote an attitude of being independent, and of being in control of one's own destiny. They further connote a sense of initiative, of being able to engage in productive and meaningful endeavours without the prompting of other people. This value of self-help and self-responsibility, and the attitude of independence can be applied not only to individual persons but also to private organizations, such as a cooperative. Applying this value and attitude to a cooperative, one sees the cooperative as capable of functioning with its own internally generated resources, and of attaining its goals without needing to depend on external resources.

Traditional thinking that self-determination and responsibility are 'masculine traits' is simply a part of a gender schema, which refers to culturally formulated concepts about masculinity and femininity. In fact, women also have the capacity for self-help and self-responsibility.

In other words, the participation of rural women in national building activities should be enhanced through the co-operative approach and they should be given incentives to form co-operatives of their own. Nevertheless, women's programmes should be developed to train the rural women in home economics, health, nutrition and child care. The effective participation of women in such activities will help improve the quality of life in rural communities. Looking at how women's cooperatives are strong and economically fruitful in Asian

countries like Bangladesh, India and Sri-Lanka, it is clear that these countries found that cooperatives are good tools to empower women and the society as a whole (Brock-Utne, 1999: 205- 220)

However, whether in Asia or elsewhere, in order to transform women into successful rural entrepreneurs, small women farmers and rural women's cooperatives/rural women-dominated cooperatives do not only need improved access to essential social services such as basic health care and education, safe drinking water and electricity, but also need a widening range of support services including credit, product and market information, technology, management skills and training in enterprise development.

Bloom and Canning et al. (2007) mention that "Promoting rural women's cooperative businesses in Thailand: a training kit" is an outcome of an FAO Technical Cooperation Programme (TCP) Project, Capacity Building for Promotion of Cooperative Small Farmer and Women Group Activities. Under the project, FAO collaborated with the Cooperative Promotion Department (CPD) of the Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives of the Government of Thailand in enhancing the CPD's capacities for appropriate training of their trainers at provincial and local levels for the promotion of cooperative business activities for small farmers and rural women. Bloom and Canning et al. (2007) argue that "the project contributed to food security by improving the self-help capacities and livelihood opportunities for small farmers, in particular women" (Bloom and Canning et al. 2007: 295). They add that the FAO TCP project assisted in strengthening and building the in-house training capacity of the CPD in five regional training centres in central, northern, north-Eastern, eastern and southern Thailand. Training of trainers and field demonstration activities were conducted in the five regions and a comprehensive cooperative training strategy was adapted to different local conditions for capacity-building of rural women as successful cooperative entrepreneurs, making use of FAO's agricultural cooperative development experience in the region (Bloom and Canning et al. *ibid.* p.315).

4.8.6 Women's empowerment through cooperatives in the Southern province

Taking the case of Agricultural Cooperatives Union of Gikongoro or "Union des coopératives agricoles de Gikongoro" (UNICOOPAGI) as an example, or "Agricultural Cooperatives Union of Gikongoro", it has always included a large number of women - about 7 000 among its 12 000 members. However, despite this figures, before women were not efficiently

involved in the life of the union and its member associations, and did not benefit from its activities. Although most of the union's members were women, they only represented 10 percent of the decision-making. The common thinking then in Rwanda was that women could not speak in the presence of men, or at least should not do so repeatedly. People also believed that women could not own large animals. Women were thus excluded when the union provided loans for this purpose (Rondinelli and Shabbir Cheema (eds.), 2003: 67)

However, both the local government and NGOs working in the field of gender and development played a positive role in the livelihood struggle of members of this gigantic cooperative. Following mobilizations and meetings at the grassroots level, to evoke concerns on women's issues and the relevance of equality between women and men for rural development, women are currently very dynamic in the union and its associations, but their representation is still low. To give only one example, 48 of the 128 members of the union's different structures are now women; before the project, only 8 women sat on these committees, this means that the representation of women is now 37.5% as against 6.25% formerly (MINECOFIN, 2007: 4-7). Comparing this to the representation of women involved in cooperatives in Mayaga region, overall representation in decision-making in different fields is 54.2% of women (see appendix 4: table 4) and specifically 74% of people involved in cooperatives in Mayaga region are women (see appendix 4, table 2).

Additionally, some members of UNICOOPAGI benefitted from training in developing revenue-generating projects and in managing loans which helped both women and men to take control of and improve their economic status; likewise, women involved in cooperatives in Mayaga region benefitted from study tours inside as well as from outside of their districts and province. Moreover, thanks to the training women from UNICOOPAGI have received, women no longer hesitate to apply for loans and they know how to manage them (Barnett, et al, 1997: 277). Another positive outcome from the training is agricultural innovations, which prompted members of UNICOOPAGI to replicate some of these activities, such as growing vegetables in bags, composting, using natural pesticides, and so on. This was observed on a field trip to the former Gitarama province, a city about an hour from Gikongoro (now Nyamagabe). Replicating these techniques had very positive economic and environmental effects (MINICOFIN, 2002).

Nevertheless, the difference in achievement between UNICOOPAGI and cooperatives in Mayaga is very interesting for development practitioners and policy-makers. UNICOOPAGI

got a lot of financial support from CIDA, Care International, World Vision International and the government of Rwanda; while most of the cooperatives in Mayaga region started from very little money from the contributions of the members, but they achieved more progress both economically and socially than UNICOOPAGI. From the researcher's analysis, the reason is clear, both development and empowerment come from inside. UNICOOPAGI used a top-down and needs-based approach while cooperatives in Mayaga regions adopted a bottom-up approach and asset-based approach. More details on these approaches will be found in chapter four. The reasons for the greater involvement of women in Mayaga region cooperatives, and the success of these cooperatives, is explored in the next section.

4.8.7 Constraints/weaknesses of cooperatives from the early stage

Korten (1980) claims that "very few benefits were delivered by cooperatives" (Korten, 1980: 481, in De Beer and Swanepoel, 1997). This was a reality in Rwanda, and this research provides three reasons that were the root cause of the limited success of cooperatives (see appendix 2 (Q3) & appendix 3 (individual interview iv). Firstly, cooperatives were not people-driven but imposed on the people by the government. In this situation, the government of Rwanda always determined for communities what was to be funded. Cooperatives then had no other alternative than to choose from what is offered. This situation sometimes pushed cooperatives to change to what is available as they were worried for financial support. Secondly, the cooperatives have always increased community dependency in Rwanda given the fact they were controlled from outside the community. This involvement of the officials in the local cooperatives' affairs was the root cause of the lack of skills transfer as the members of cooperatives could never gain a full understanding of their role in cooperatives' activities and programmes. Additionally, most of these cooperatives were from rural areas with a high rate of illiteracy. In view of this, cooperatives' members often lacked knowledge and understanding of management principles, including weak control mechanisms.

The ILO (1992) highlights that globally the development of the cooperative movement in Africa has been hampered by several constraints, the main ones being classified as follows:

Table 14: Some constraints on cooperatives

Domain	Constraints
1. Structures of support to the cooperatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of clear rules relating to consultation of stakeholders in the cooperative sector. • Lack or shortage of human and financial resources. • Multiplicity of stakeholders without any coordination and consultation, resulting in isolated cooperative units. • The external promoters or funders of cooperatives often interfere to some extent in their management • The acknowledgement procedure is still very centralized at Kigali in the office of the task-force for cooperatives
2. Intrinsic weaknesses to the cooperative dynamics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of mechanisms to encourage the performing cooperatives • Incompatibility in the functions: cooperatives are asked to form unions, however, experience showed that the role of union sometimes goes beyond protecting supporting the members' interests and interfere in the management of the member organizations. • The cooperatives are generally the results of a top-down approach; hence, there is a risk that some members of the cooperatives may behave as assisted people or "sleeping partners."
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The capital and access to information being limited for some cooperatives, this does not grant the facilities of accessing to the external financing.
4. Weaknesses at the cooperators level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In general some cooperators do not have a cooperative spirit, as they are still affected by the last bad experience • In some cases, cooperatives are often small unprofitable exploitations. • The cooperative spirit is often biased by the promoters who make regrouping promises, in view to benefit from the credits, grants, training... and the initiative to be regrouped is not necessarily related to a need felt by the cooperators.

Source: ILO, 1992: 19

The following matrix simply lists down all possible manifestations of gender issues in cooperatives- varying from the reproductive roles of women which are not taken into account in the planning of programs and services in some cooperatives, to the tendency to assign tasks and roles to members and leaders of the cooperatives based on gender stereotypes, and not on actual and potential capacities and competence of the members.

Table 15: Manifestations of gender issues in cooperatives

Manifestations of gender issues in cooperatives	Effects on:		Effects on cooperatives
	Women	Men	
<p>Membership Requirements</p> <p>1. Restrictive state laws, and coop policies and practices on membership requirements.</p> <p>2. High or unaffordable minimum share capital</p>	<p>For some coops, Women with limited or no income, find it difficult to enter cooperatives</p> <p>Economic dependence on men continues.</p>	<p>Find it easier to enter cooperatives</p> <p>Stereotyped role as breadwinners reinforced.</p>	<p>Limited number of women members. Not able to utilize potentials of women.</p> <p>Not able to respond to gender issues of society.</p>
<p>On information on members</p> <p>1. Lack of awareness & understanding of the particular conditions of Women-and men members. (gender Disaggregated data)</p>	<p>Practical and strategic gender needs are not addressed. Confines women to non-leadership situation.</p>	<p>Allows men to dominate leadership positions.</p>	<p>Coop is not able to Adequately and effectively respond to the needs of all of its members. Coop is not able to fully utilize the potentials of women.</p>
<p>2. Reproductive roles of women are not taken into account in the planning of programs and services.</p>	<p>Attending coop meetings and activities becomes additional burden. Absence of support services (day care services) maternity leaves, etc</p>	<p>No paternity leaves; Men are not sensitive and responsive to the needs of women members and personnel</p>	<p>Plans and policies are not sensitive to the needs of women members & leaders, and personnel</p>
<p>3. Tendency to assign tasks & roles to members and leaders based on gender stereotyped, and not on actual and potential capacities and competence.</p>	<p>Women are assigned to positions that are extension of their household tasks (e.g. secretaries and treasurers).</p>	<p>Men are assigned to challenging and prestigious roles.</p>	<p>Capacity and competence of women and men are not fully utilized and developed</p>
<p>On Leadership</p> <p>1. Minimal participation of women in leadership/ decision-making</p>	<p>Women may not be able to access and control coop programs</p>	<p>Men have greater access to and control of programs and benefits of coop</p>	<p>Reinforces traditional gender roles even in coop affairs. Higher positions and decisions are monopolized by men.</p>

<p>2. Nomination and election standards and practices of some cooperatives, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-nomination, which many women are not comfortable with. • Pre-selection of nominees by a “nominators” group which is usually dominated by men. 	<p>Opportunity for leadership position very limited. Not able to effectively share in the planning, use and control of resources and benefits of coop. Practical and strategic gender needs are not addressed.</p>	<p>Have greater opportunity for leadership positions. With more opportunities to develop leadership skills and confidence. With more opportunity to participate in the planning, use and control of the resources and benefits of the cooperative.</p>	<p>Leadership is dominated by men. Not able to adequately and effectively respond to the needs and concerns of its women members because of limited representation of women in its leadership structure. Not able to fully utilize the potentials of women</p>
<p>On Provision of Services to Members</p> <p>1. Unequal access to coop education and training because of failure to address the practical gender needs of women and hence, the failure to help women find time to attend to these type of activities.</p>	<p>Limits their access to capability build up and self- development</p>	<p>Gives them better opportunity for self-development</p>	<p>Imbalanced development of its women- and men members.</p>
<p>2. Unequal access to credit due to women’s low share capital as a result of their unstable income</p>	<p>Deprives women of Economic independence. Limits their access to and control of benefits of cooperatives.</p>	<p>Reinforces the notion of men as sole breadwinners. More control of benefits lead to more opportunities for recreation.</p>	<p>Low capital build-up. Cannot respond to other felt needs of members; services are limited</p>
<p>3. Unequal opportunities for career growth in cooperative</p>	<p>Limits number of women in leadership and management positions. Less representation of women in planning and decision-making</p>	<p>Men dominate leadership and management positions. Men monopolize planning and decision-making in coop.</p>	<p>Higher delinquency rates Fast turnover of women members and staff.</p>
<p>On handling of external affairs / attitudes of members that affect the coop</p> <p>1. Failure to give attention to or show concern about the unequal sharing of housework and parenting of couples who are both members of cooperatives.</p>	<p>Women prioritize housework/child care more than coop affairs. Balancing of housework and coop activities becomes sources of stress and pressures</p>	<p>Men have more time for coop activities and more opportunity to assume leadership positions.</p>	<p>Domestic problems affect participation of couples in cooperatives. Minimal attendance of women in meetings & less participation in coop activities</p>

Source: ILO, 1992: *ibid.*

In spite of some weaknesses mentioned in the discussions on cooperatives, it is clear that cooperatives have the potential to increase the assets of a poor community through pooling very small individual assets; and have the potential to improve livelihoods through improving income, nutrition, education etc; and have the potential to build other assets, such as improving women's managerial or business skills. Hence, cooperatives are potentially an important vehicle of transformation of the rural economy.

4.9 Conclusion

In conclusion, chapter four discussed how the post-1994 period in Rwanda involved the complex challenge of designing and implementing programs for the reconstruction and reconciliation of a country polarized by four years of the war (1990-1994) that ended in genocide. This process was facilitated by macroeconomic adjustment and structural reforms that allowed for a rapid socio-economic recovery, as well as by generous financial, technical assistance, and policy advice from the international community. Thus, this chapter showed how the post-1994 period was a period of crisis in Rwanda, but was also an opportunity to learn from the mistakes of the past, in order to build a better future for the Rwandan community. We have seen that the economic crisis began in 1990 when the first measures of an IMF structural adjustment program were carried out. We have also seen that worldwide research studies on the effectiveness of privatization over the last ten years provide ample evidence that when the balance of social and economic indicators are not present, a privatized activity which appears to have a successful outcome may be only short-term or misleading. Privatization in some cases led to the retrenchment of women who joined cooperatives in order to find an alternative source of livelihood.

We have found that, despite a big effort by the Rwandan government towards women's rights and empowerment, one can still see some cases of sexual violence whether in Mayaga region or Rwanda as a whole. We have seen that the Government of National Unity started a process which ten years later, conducted to the reaffirmation of the relevant role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts and in peace-building, and in the development of the country as a whole. This chapter further discussed the process of women's empowerment in Rwanda which was run under different reforms such as decentralisation, which, in one way or

another, had both positive and negative implications for the empowerment of women, especially in rural areas.

This chapter further discussed that poverty analysis has shown that the overwhelming majority of the poor in Rwanda are living in the rural subsistence economy, and that the key actors in that economy are women, who fundamentally lack the resources to invest in changing farming practice and remain starkly within the subsistence economy.

Finally, this chapter discussed how the Southern province of Rwanda empowered women through their involvement in cooperatives, as self-reliant and economically viable organizations. We found that cooperatives are known to be effective for the welfare of their members, and that members of a cooperative meet their common economic and social needs. Having established the economic, political and institutional context within which the Rwandan government has put into place policies designed to empower women, the findings from the case study are now examined within that context in order to establish whether women at the grassroots level have been empowered, and what impact this has had on their lives.

CHAPTER FIVE: ANALYSIS OF THE RESEARCH FINDINGS

5.1 Introduction

From the previous chapters, we found that in order to increase human resources in keeping the social fabric of rural communities and reviving local economies in Mayaga region and Rwanda as a whole, it is vital for women to be fully involved. This means that women must equally be given opportunities and systematically integrated in the design and implementation of rural development programmes and projects, to be sure that men and women can participate and benefit on equal terms. For this to happen, there is a precondition for the achievement of a better balance between women and men in making decisions that affect the life and economy of rural society, through the active encouragement and involvement of women's associations, cooperatives, networks and the promotion of women into planning and managerial posts.

In the post-1994 period, the Rwandan Government has been implementing the Poverty Reduction Strategy, and this process recognises the importance of organisations that bring poor people together, like cooperatives. As part of the programme to reduce poverty, the government wants to encourage people to form cooperatives in order to improve their economic prospects and the economy of the society as a whole. However, this chapter shows how cooperatives do not only solve financial issues, but have the potential to solve social problems as well. In this chapter, we see how women involved in cooperatives in Mayaga region have made a tremendous achievement, not only in terms of decision-making in their households, but also in how they played a significant role in conflict resolution and peace-building in their communities.

Chapter four described the social, economic and institutional context within which cooperatives were established in Rwanda. In this chapter, the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework is used as a tool of analysis of the experiences of women in these cooperatives in the Mayaga region.

In order to understand the achievements of women working in cooperatives in the Mayaga region, we must first consider that “the vulnerability context is fundamental to being able to

design interventions that have a lasting, positive effect on household livelihood security” (Barnett & Blaikie, 1992: 147). This chapter helps us to understand the assets that women possess in order to deal with that vulnerability context. Thirdly, this chapter looks at the outcomes of the cooperatives on women’s livelihoods, and to what extent policies, processes and institutions affect positively or negatively the strategies that women use in the struggle to achieve positive livelihood outcomes.

5.2 Profile of the study participants

From the information in table 4 (p. 94-95), the socio-economic profile of the study participants is as follows:

- A total of 5586 members of cooperatives, 4132 women (74%) and 1454 men (26%), from 12 cooperatives working in the Mayaga region, participated in the study
- Given the fact that people who join cooperatives are mostly poor people who use cooperatives as a livelihood strategy, and the fact that poverty impacts more negatively on women than men, this study was conducted predominantly with poor women in the Mayaga region.
- The profile of participants reveals that 70% of women head their households, whether as widows, single mothers or divorcees. In Rwanda as a whole, due mostly to the 1994 genocide, the number of women-headed households was raised to 38% in post- 1994 Rwanda as opposed to 20 % before 1994 (AVEGA-AGAHOZO, 1999).
- The rate of divorce in Mayaga region rose to 5% in the post-1994 period, from a estimate of 2% in that region before 1994. Compared to the whole country, the rate of divorce moved from 6 % before 1994 to 8.5% in the post-1994 Rwanda (HAGURUKA, 2002). This increase in divorce is attributed by some analysts to women being aware of their rights to divorce, and to the fact that women are becoming economically independent.
- The highest number of women attending cooperatives is in the age cohort of between 35 and 60 years old. Women of this age group are not responsible for small children, while at the same time they are still strong enough to work and have more time as their children are away from home in the day.

- Given the fact that there is no cooperative member with a university level of education, 2% of members having a secondary school level and 8% a post-primary school level, against 82% who have only primary school education and 11% of whom are illiterate; one can deduce that poverty is somehow related to poor education.
- During the second tranche of fieldwork, it was disclosed to the researcher that 5 % of respondents were single mothers. This is a status that many women do not like to disclose, as it is still unusual in Mayaga region and in Rwandan society as a whole. Cooperatives are further constituted by 30 % married women.
- For ethical reasons, the researcher could not ascertain the number of women who are HIV positive, which women are genocide survivors and which women have husbands in jail for their involvement in the genocide. Respondents indicated that there were a good number of all of these categories of women among cooperatives' members.
- This means that, in the beginning, cooperatives in Mayaga region were constituted by people working together in a very complex situation. These complex social relations meant that the establishment of cooperatives was not easy.
- The findings of the study show the successes registered by these cooperatives in reconciling these groups and in reducing their vulnerability context.

5.3 Cooperatives' organization

Cooperatives in Mayaga region are very well organized. Their administrative organisation relies on the in-built, active and direct participation of the members. It is the duty and responsibility of the members to handle and administer their business and they do not share their power with anyone whatsoever, even with a public authority. Furthermore, the decision of the members is final in all cooperatives' affairs, especially those related to the organisation and the political direction of the cooperative.

The organisation of cooperatives in Mayaga region is inscribed in their constitution. A cooperative's constitution is formulated by its members, with the technical assistance of the cooperatives' officer in the district. Two cooperatives could afford to hire a lawyer to help them with the final draft to submit to the Task Force for Cooperatives in Rwanda, the organ that acknowledges legally and registers the cooperatives in Rwanda. The constitution documents the operating strategy of the cooperative; hence, drawing up the constitution is a

pre-condition to be registered. However, cooperatives are led by two set of rules. They have “itegeko nshinga” a formal constitution to send to Kigali for registration and “amategeko y’ umwihariko” or internal rules, which are related to the discipline among cooperatives’ members. The universally accepted system of one member, one vote in cooperatives in Mayaga region shows the level of democracy in cooperatives, and this system has positive impacts on the involvement in decision-making process for women involved in cooperatives. From the findings in Table 4 (pages 94-5) one can see that women are in the majority in cooperatives in Mayaga region. Being in the majority means that they have the potential to win elections for the leading positions on committees in the cooperatives. These committees are only executive, as the high level decisions are taken by the general assembly made by all the cooperative’s members. For almost all the cooperatives, the structure of the executive committee is the same, constituted by seven members:

- Chairperson
- Vice-chairperson
- Secretary
- Treasurer
- 3 advisers

Sometimes, the number of advisers goes up to five. There is another group which is separated from the official committees, made by three members of cooperatives – called *commissaires* or commissioners. They are also elected and control the management of the funds inside the cooperatives and give a report to the general assembly. They also give a copy of the report to the office of cooperatives in the districts and to NGOs that help cooperatives in one way or another.

While there is some support from outsiders, the main activities of cooperatives in Mayaga region and Rwanda as a whole are carried out by the cooperatives members. These activities are: farming (cassava, vegetables, rice and maize), multiplication of seeds (like cassava), and basket weaving. In addition, cooperatives members engage in other tasks including credit schemes, bank transactions, purchasing raw materials, purchasing or selling fertilizers and so forth. Every cooperative also has to write a constitution in order to be registered by the Task Force for Cooperatives in Rwanda. In this process, they are assisted technically by the office in charge of cooperatives in the local government.

Cooperatives have different ways of earning income and sharing the profits. Thus, the example given below of how one particular cooperative works, cannot be generalised for all the cooperatives. But what they have in common is that every month, all the cooperatives register the profit they have earned and at the end of every term, all the members meet to decide what to do with their income. In terms of sharing the profits, most of the cooperatives, (1) take 50% of the income and divide it among members as dividends, (2) place 20% in the cooperative's account in the bank, (3) and use 30% for the daily functioning of the cooperative. In addition, although the situation of their bank accounts was not revealed to the researcher during the fieldwork, the researcher was informed that every woman in each of the 12 cooperatives has her own bank account and has learnt how to make savings and bank transactions. For more details on the activities of the cooperatives, see table 16 on the next page.

Cooperatives	Nature of the business	Objective	192 Contribution for the business			Cash in Bank
			OWC	LGC	NGOsC	
						FRW
KOPANTO	Farming/cassava	-Eradicate poverty and promote cassava	Labor and 50Frw per month	Land, legal doc. and training	Advocacy	70000Fr
NKUNDUMU-LIMO	Farming/Cassava	- Eradicate poverty and multiply cassava seeds	Labor and 100Frw per Month	Land, legal doc. and temporary offices	Advocacy and training	400000
TWITEZIM - BERE	Farming/Cassava	- Eradicate poverty	Labor, purchasing seeds + 100Frw per month	Land, a house for office and training.	Advocacy, 50000Frw funding	375465
KAIMU	Credit scheme/farming	-Eradicate poverty and promote agriculture	Labor, land and 50 Frw per month	Training and temporary offices	Advocacy, training and 50000 Fr	2654239
CATM	Farming/rice	-Eradicate poverty and promote rice farming	Labor, purchasing seeds + 100 Frw/month	Land, temporary offices and a store hall	Factory to process rice and training	3627591
GIKONKO	Farming/rice	-Eradicate poverty and promote rice farming	Labor, paying seeds and 200Fr/m	Land, offices and a store house	Factory, training and 200000Frw	2198450
COAMANYA	Farming/maize	-Eradicate poverty and promote good maize seeds	Labor, paying seeds	Land, training and lending of offices	Providing selected seeds	1976241
DUTERIM-BERE	Credit scheme/farming	-Eradicate poverty and promote agriculture	Land, labor and 50 Fr/m	Training and loans	Advocacy and training	968341
DUFATANYE	Growing vegetables	-Eradicate poverty and promote vegetables farming	Labor, paying seeds	Land ,training and market	Advocacy and training	645340
IMPABARUT	Farming and selling fertilizers	-Eradicate poverty and teach fertilizer use	Land, purchasing fertilizers	Training and store for the harvest	Providing seeds and advocacy	1765200
KOMINYA	Cassava growers	-Eradicate poverty and multiply cassava seeds	Land and labor	Training, seeds and store	Training, advocacy and 50000Frw	180000
BERWA-MUNYANDA	“Agaseke” project (Basket weaving)	-Eradicate poverty and promote arts	50Fr/m and paying raw materials	Market, office and store	-	76475

With regard to the administration of the cooperatives, the management of the cooperatives is horizontal. In this system of management, cooperatives doing the same business can visit each other and exchange information, skills and experiences. In other words, horizontal management gives cooperatives some space to independently develop networks with other organisations along similarity of interests and objectives. Cooperatives in Mayaga region pessimistically plan to adopt a vertical system in the future, whereby they will integrate the hierarchical organisation of the cooperative movement notably through the Unions, Federations and Confederations of cooperatives. To run their operations more effectively, cooperatives can form themselves into Unions. From the views of a key informant interviewee, a Cooperative Union is a group of at least two cooperatives whose business purposes are identical or complementary, with the purpose to represent and defend their common interests, and at least two Cooperative Unions can form a Federation.¹⁴

Due to the top-down nature of the vertical model, many cooperatives in the agricultural sector prefer to start their own regional or even local networks that play the role of federations, unions or apexes, and this has led to the creation of some very viable unions and federations. As a matter of fact, rice farmers in Rwanda recently formed the Rice Cooperative Union (UCORIRWA) so they may play the role of negotiating prices with the government.

In connection with the schedule of activities of cooperatives in Mayaga region, nine of the sampled cooperatives have activities 3 days a week, and three of them have activities 4 days a week. For the rest of the days of the week, they work for their own households. The members do the activities themselves, but a member can send another member of the family to replace her/him when she/he is sick or has another serious constraint. In that situation, the representative of the executive committee of the cooperative is informed in writing or verbally. The labor is not paid, but after the harvest for agricultural cooperatives, members get some dividends, whether in food or cash from the sale of the produce. Even though there are no bosses regulating work, every week the executive committee of a cooperative sits to make a schedule of the activities for the following week, and sometimes the committee makes a schedule for the whole month.

¹⁴ Interview with a key informant, Gender Desk officer in Nyanza district (interview held on March 25th, 2009)

5.4 SLF: Implications for women working in cooperatives in Mayaga region

5.4.1 Vulnerability context for women in Mayaga region

5.4.1.1 The meaning of vulnerability in Mayaga region and its ‘gender face’

The terms vulnerability and poverty are sometimes taken as meaning the same. The linkages between vulnerability and poverty have been the subject of intensive research and discussion. Depending on the discipline and on the objectives of the study, vulnerability is often seen as being a component of poverty or vice versa. As vulnerability is a pretty new concept – especially in comparison to poverty – some authors, particularly those working in the context of development cooperation, see vulnerability as one aspect, which can cause poverty or hinder people from escaping out of poverty (Cornwall, 2003: 95). Prowse (2003) mentions a few studies, which describe “vulnerability as being part of the multiple dimensions of poverty” (Prowse 2003: 9). The inclusion of vulnerability into analyses of poverty is supported by the fact that today poverty is not only being measured as income poverty, but seen within a larger framework of well-being, which tries to take a comprehensive view on the livelihood of the people.

From the views of respondents¹⁵ on question two, they tend to describe their situation using the term “ubukene” or poverty; sometimes they use the Kinyarwanda expression “ibihe bibi” (vulnerability situation) interchangeably. However, in Kinyarwanda, these are two different concepts. “Ubukene” can be caused by “ibihe bibi” but not necessarily the opposite. In other words, “ibihe bibi” or vulnerability can be caused by factors which are not necessarily “ubukene” or poverty. These respondents’ arguments can be linked to the views of Chambers (1989) who argues that “vulnerability is not synonymous with poverty” (Chambers, 1989: 37). Chambers (1989) further argues that most poor people are vulnerable, but not all vulnerable people are poor and that “persons who are not in a state of material deprivation may, nonetheless, be vulnerable to poverty” (Chambers, *ibid.* p. 47).

This is true in the sense that in the last decade, women’s condition in Mayaga region and Rwanda as a whole was always characterized by a chronic deprivation both of the resources, and of the capabilities, power and security relevant for the enjoyment of an adequate standard

¹⁵ In this section, where specific focus groups are not referenced, ‘respondents’ refers to the amalgamated findings from the focus groups from the twelve cooperatives in Mayaga region.

of living and other cultural, civil, political and economic rights. The poverty experienced by women in Mayaga region and their situation of vulnerability are the state of being without the basic needs of daily living, often associated with need, privation and lack of resources across a broad range of circumstances, in most cases in the name of culture.

Respondents connect vulnerability to natural or socially induced crises. They express it in the Kinyarwanda language that “ntawuterwa yiteguye” meaning that “evil is unpredictable.”¹⁶ This expression was used to illustrate how their vulnerability is associated with their insecurity and defenselessness in the face of crises in the Mayaga region such as floods, climate change, or plant diseases like “kagungu” for potatoes and “akalibata” for bananas. UN/ISDR (2004a) makes it clear that “a hazard is a potentially damaging physical event, phenomenon or human activity, which may cause the loss of life or injury, property damage, social and economic disruption or environmental degradation” (UN/ISDR: 2004a). UN/ISDR (2004a) further mentions that hazards can be single, sequential or combined in their origin and effects and that “each hazard is characterised by its location, intensity and probability” (UN/ISDR: *ibid.*). In spite of the confusion mentioned above, the reality is that poverty and vulnerability reinforce each other, and a combination of poverty and vulnerability (“ubukene” + “ibihe bibi”) pose constraints for women in Mayaga region in their journey to sustainable livelihoods.

Additionally, the expression of respondents using a proverb “gukena si ugusahurwa” meaning “I am poor but still a human-being”¹⁷, shows how poverty has been understood to mean not only “a lack of access to resources, productive assets and income resulting in a state of material deprivation” (Cornwall, 2003:16), but as discussed in chapter two, Cornwall shows that the concept of poverty and the discussion of its causal explanations have been “broadened to include lack of dignity and autonomy” (Cornwall, 2003:*ibid.*). The case study findings indicate that cooperatives increased women’s participation and autonomy, and provided self-fulfillment which focuses on women’s attainment of their deepest and strongest desires. However, self-fulfillment and autonomy involve having all the human rights, social and economic as well as civil and political, that enable women to obtain the conditions of successful agency that enable them to deal with their vulnerability context and poverty. In

¹⁶ Interview with a focus group from DUFATANYE cooperative, Nyanza district (interview held on March 21th , 2009)

¹⁷ Interview with a focus-group from IMPABARUTA cooperative, Kamonyi District (interview held on Mach 26th, 2009)

other words, given the fact that the poverty of women has its root in gender discrimination and thus deprivation of rights (chapter two), one can confirm the views of Arjan de Haan (1998), that “to deal with the vulnerability of women could be identified as a human rights problem” (Arjan de Haan, 1998: 11).

In view of the above, poverty for women in Mayaga region or in any given patriarchal society challenges us to opt for new approaches which are able to prioritise a more inclusive concept of the vulnerability context, discouraging general or subjective approaches and highlighting the human dimensions of the vulnerability of women. In other words, women in Mayaga are not poor because they are lazy, but because their rights to access community assets were always denied. It is therefore reasonable to place the vulnerability of women (whether in Rwanda or elsewhere) in the context of human rights, as in that context, poverty implies not just levels of material deprivation from accessing community assets, but above all the negation of rights of that access. On the other side, respondents disclosed on question one that that while stresses in Mayaga region are related to long-term trends, some stresses stem directly from within the household and include frequent illness, alcoholism, and violent or disruptive behaviour of a household member.

5.4.1.2 Consequences of HIV/AIDS

During one of the focus group interviews, it was revealed that between 1994 and 2000, the cooperative’s membership was made up exclusively of HIV positive women.¹⁸ Later, in 2001, they were advised by the district Department of Gender and local women’s councils to include other people to avoid stigmatizing themselves. Respondents further said that most of the HIV positive women were infected during the 1994 genocide as a result of rape; others were infected by their partners. Some of the focus group interviewees showed that they were infected when they were sex workers – a work that they adopted as a livelihood strategy, before they joined other women in cooperatives. A HIV Commission in Rwanda report shows that “an astounding 70 per cent of women raped during 1994 genocide are HIV-positive” (HIV/AIDS in Rwanda: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki>). According to the arguments of interviewees, more than a decade after the 1994 genocide, the impact of the sexual violence

¹⁸ Interview of a focus group from TWITEZIMBERE, Ruhango district (interview held on February 28th, 2009)

faced by survivors continues to be monumental, posing challenges for their daily survival or livelihood strategies.

Indeed, experience in Mayaga region and Rwanda as a whole showed that the disease has had a systemic impact, affecting all aspects of rural livelihoods (social, psychological, cultural and economic), and some studies argue for caution, “pointing to the different outcomes among different strata and cultural groups and the variance in intra-household gender relations” (Bennell, 2005: 467). There is broad consensus, however, that “the severity of the HIV/AIDs impact depends on the household’s basket of entitlements and its morbidity, mortality and demographic profile” (Sue and Kanyanta, 2007: 259). The influence of morbidity factors rest on whether or not, as a consequence of the disease, “the household head is chronically ill, the labour dependency ratio and the number of orphaned children incorporated into the household” (Bennell, *ibid.* p.472). In fact, when the researcher visited a cooperative in the former Ntongwe district, it was revealed during the focus group that one of the main problems for cooperative members was the burden caused by genocide survivor orphans, left by relatives and friends of cooperatives’ members. This situation pushes these foster families further into a situation of vulnerability.¹⁹

The information from the focus group interviews on questions two and seven has clearly shown how the presence of HIV/AIDs within some members’ families has worsened household vulnerability to food security shocks, causing them to engage earlier and more frequently in coping strategies. The disease has effects on both the ill and their caregivers. In this situation, children and elderly members of the families of the infected people have to struggle to make up the loss of labour. However, before joining cooperatives, healthy members of the household of the infected women or members of their families tried to deal with the sickness or death of a partner or parent by looking for paid work in the nearby cities such Ruhango, Butare, Nyanza and Gitarama. Because this results in the household having a shortage of labour at home, some households shifted to growing lower maintenance food crops that are often less nutritious. Views from the focus group C from COAMANYA cooperative show that some members of cooperatives were forced to draw on savings and sell livestock, although households with draught animals tried to retain them at all costs.²⁰

¹⁹ *ibid.*

²⁰ Interview with a focus group C from COAMANYA cooperative, Nyanza district (interview held on 18th March, 2009)

Additionally, they highlighted that households also consumed less and spent less on non-essential health care and on education. In some circumstances, some members of the cooperatives in Mayaga region were forced to withdraw children from school because their labour was needed at home, especially girls who, like their mothers, are still treated as caregivers and house-workers in the Rwandan culture. However, this must be seen in the light of the overall finding, which was that more girls are going to school, and cooperatives have improved the level of education.²¹

Failing to cope with such vulnerability, some households in Mayaga region resorted to more desperate coping measures. In an interview during the focus group from NKUNDUMULIMO cooperative, an HIV positive member of the focus group witnessed that before joining cooperatives, she was forced to sell off her key assets, draught animals and even land left by her deceased husband, because she had no other means of feeding her children and paying their school fees. In that situation, some women chose to borrow money from moneylenders at very high rates of interest, or chose to borrow money against agricultural products after the harvest will be ready. In this situation, they end up in putting their families in a critical financial situation as they give their whole crop to the people they borrowed from. This is what is called in Kinyarwanda “kotsa”, especially applied to the coffee crop. “Kotsa” means that when you are hungry, you cannot wait for cooking but rather you put some food on the fire to make sure that you eat. In such circumstances, surviving household members are committed to depend on charity, or households are forced to break up as members attempt to fend for themselves – often through distress migration to other areas.²²

This vulnerability did not only affect women in the Mayaga region, but in the society as a whole. In some cases, communities and women’s organizations in Rwanda have responded with a number of support measures that contribute to household coping capabilities. These include providing patient and child care, and helping through “umubyizi” or “umuganda”. These are cultural practices in Rwanda where by the community takes one or two days (even more) to help someone who is sick or stricken by a sudden shock or stress. The community can also take the person to the health centre using “ingobyi” which is a traditional tool to carry someone in emergency situation to the nearest medical center. Communities have also

²¹ *ibid.*

²² Interview with a focus group from NKUNDUMULIMO cooperative, Ruhango district (interview held on February 25th, 2009)

responded by adapting certain social and cultural norms. Some women's organizations like AVEGA (an association for genocide survivor widows) have moved to cut down the traditional mourning days, to revise some funeral practices that put a heavy financial burden on the families of the deceased, and also to pay the small budget set aside for the funeral.

Apart from the above examples, there are a number of other examples of the economic impact of HIV/AIDS on the rural poor, and the community always plays an important role in coping with this impact. In fact, the loss of a spouse can have a major upsetting effect on the agricultural cycle because of the division of agricultural labour between women and men. Other methods of coping with HIV/AIDS mentioned by respondents included the decrease in investment in agricultural inputs, the decline of areas under ploughing (the result of which is a loss in food production and food security), decreased yields, farming of less labour-demanding crops, a change to non-agricultural activities, and a decrease in the care and health of livestock. Finally, testimony given by a key informant in Care International in Nyamagabe district indicated that some of the loans contracted by the sick are not all paid before their death and this reduces the capacity of the micro-finance institutions and the banks to give loans to the remaining family members.²³

5.4.1.3 Gender disparities in access to land

We have seen in chapter three that men and women did not have equal access to land until 2006, when Rwanda's legislature removed gender barriers to land ownership. While this initiative of the Rwandan government for the new land policy is to be appreciated, the reality is that by the time the land reform was approved by the parliament, all the land was already allocated and in the hands of men. Hence, apart from land redistribution (which is difficult or even impossible), there is little opportunity for a woman to acquire a piece of land. Nevertheless, women now can inherit land left by their husbands, or share land left by their parents or by their brothers, which was not possible before the new land policy. Some women who have enough money can also buy their own land. In fact, a landless situation keeps women in a vulnerability context, given the fact that they are not free to use the land still called the property of their husbands or even their male children. Indeed, even when the

²³ Key informant interview with a Care International worker in Nyamagabe (March 2009)

husband dies, the customary law still does not acknowledge the wife as having full rights to that land left by her deceased husband.

The information given by the respondents on question five indicates that throughout the patrilineal history of Rwanda, the usufruct right to land has always prevailed and customary land use practices determined access to land in terms of use rights or ownership. Women were essentially temporary custodians of land passing from father to male heir, even though they could be de facto heads of household. While responding to question three, respondents informed that, as unpaid labourers on their husbands' land, while also cultivating separate plots (traced and delimited by their husbands) in their own right, women in Rwanda lose the rights to land following the death of their spouse. In fact, as men could get allocated or buy different pieces of land, in order to maintain them, they were committed to marrying more wives and leaving each wife in charge of a different piece of land. In that context, respondents alleged that widows and divorced women had virtually no tenure or inheritance rights with which to ensure food security for themselves or their children; it is only through their male children, or male relatives from their husband's lineage, that women have land tenure rights.

Additionally, from the insights on questions one, two and eight; respondents highlighted that socio-economic and socio-cultural norms and institutional arrangements accentuated women's inequality in terms of access to land, thereby indirectly encouraging high fertility. For instance, the fact that land title and land tenure vested in men may be a legal condition, but it also reflects socio-cultural tradition.

Even when women have access to land, their security of tenure is often precarious. In Rwanda, under customary law, men and women usually had clearly defined rights to land, trees and water as well as usufruct rights, bestowed on them by the community elders. According to Rurangwa (2002), traditional communal rights are in many regions being replaced by land tenure systems based on exclusive use, ownership and titling which tend to erode the rights of vulnerable groups, including women and minority, ethnic or nomadic groups (Rurangwa Eugène, 2002: 17).

Agricultural renovation is another factor causative to the erosion of women's security of tenure. For instance, as seen in the previous discussions, the commercialization of agriculture

(with the introduction of coffee and tea plantations) and the later demand for land, eroded women's traditional land rights. Another generic example is the substitution of food crops with cash crops. Information revealed by respondents on question five shows that, before the launching of cash crops, women - who normally produce the largest part of food crops - were traditionally entitled to use of land. According to the views of the respondents from questions one and two, once cash crops were introduced, however, the same right to land with high potential was claimed by the men farmers who grow them. As cash crops are perceived to be more profitable than food crops, competition for land use rights results between men and women, which can lead to a progressive marginalization of women farmers formerly cultivating fertile land. As a matter of fact, some additional plots of land in Mayaga region in the 1980s were used by men for plantations of coffee, to the detriment of crops like potatoes, beans and cassava, planted by women for family subsistence. Paradoxically, these coffee plantations were later cut down in the 1990s due to the lack of a market.

On questions two and seven, respondents show that women's lack of property ownership can have grave consequences in areas where AIDS and hunger are prevalent. Indeed, there is anecdotal proof to propose that women who are economically insecure and dependent on their male partners are in a weak position to negotiate protection against HIV infection, or any other sexual abuse. During the focus interviews in Ruhango district, respondents indicated that there are negative consequences of lack of property ownership for the wives of whose husbands die of AIDS in their villages, their experience is that a husband's death could mean a loss of land, house, and tools – resources that are otherwise supposed to help the surviving both the widow and her children economically cope with the tragedy.

5.4.1.4 Psychological, social and physical vulnerability of women

We have found in the previous chapters that a huge number of women were raped during the 1994 genocide, resulting in most raped women being infected by HIV. During the focus-group interviews on questions three and seven, respondents stated that they have many cases among cooperatives' members, without naming them or giving statistics. The psychological, social, and physical aspects of such atrocious sexual violations have stubbornly affected the women survivors of the genocide who are members of the cooperatives and of the society as a whole. In a society that has in the past regarded women as dependents of their male relatives and first and foremost as wives and mothers, sexual violence has disastrous effects.

For example, traditional Rwandan society still values women for the number of children they can produce. Thus, the cases of physical mutilation and violence during the 1994 genocide produced a dual damage: a physical damage based on the injury itself, and an emotional and social damage for the woman is deprived from reproducing and thus fulfilling her role as a mother.

Respondents from the focus group highlighted that, in some cases, the sexual violence has resulted in social exclusion but they could not reveal the number of such cases they have among their cooperatives' members. One respondent survivor of the 1994 genocide explained that after rape, one cannot have value in the community, and girls who are worried that they cannot find husbands, decided to flee their homes to stay in privacy or anonymity²⁴. Thus, although these women's lives were in theory secure, their traumatic experiences have robbed them of their community and identity and have reinforced their vulnerability context in the post-1994 Rwanda.

Another issue mentioned by respondents on question one, forced impregnation, has had deep psychological effects on some women who are members of cooperatives. Suffered exclusively by women, "forced pregnancy involves a violation of, among other things, reproductive freedom and sexual autonomy, and has lasting effects given that the women may then have to raise the offspring" (Watts & Mayhew, 2004: 145). Just after the 1994 genocide, raped women who became pregnant suffered intense shame and ostracization in a traditional Mayaga region society that is particularly unwilling to accept unwed mothers. Moreover, ill-treatment by society (including by their own families), has led many unmarried mothers to opt for abortion or infanticide, although this is a criminal act in Rwandan law. The passage of time is not likely to cure the psychological damage endured by the victims of forced impregnation. Indeed, "the physical injuries and their consequences ranged from mere abrasions to instant death, and include infection with sexually transmissible diseases" (World Health Organization, 2007). In fact, during the 1994 genocide, militiamen carrying the virus used it as a weapon against Tutsi women, intending to cause delayed death.

Ultimately, sexual violence had harsh and lasting consequences for women. The harm experienced by women in some cooperatives working in Mayaga region has been particularly severe in the light of the physical, psychological, and social impact that it continues to have

²⁴ Interview with the focus group (Gisagara, March 2009)

on their daily lives. With a population that is estimated to be 56 percent female, the magnitude of the detrimental effects on Rwandan society as a whole cannot be underestimated.

5.4.1.5 External factors that fuelled vulnerability for women in Mayaga region

The main factor is the Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs). Between 1990 and 1994, SAPs were imposed on the Rwandan government, and by deduction on the whole of Rwandan society. Thus, the consequences caused by SAPs were endured by Rwandans, especially the rural population whose majority is women. In September 1990, the IMF imposed a structural adjustment program on Rwanda that devalued the Rwandan franc and further impoverished the already devastated Rwandan farmers and workers (Uvin, 1998). The prices of fuel and consumer necessities were increased, and the austerity program imposed by the IMF led to a collapse in the education and health systems. Severe child malnutrition increased dramatically, and “malaria cases increased 21 percent due largely to the unavailability of anti-malarial drugs in the health centers” (World Health Organization Report, 2003).

In 1992, the IMF imposed another devaluation, further raising the prices of essentials to Rwandans. As consequences of these decisions, in Mayaga region alone, “peasants up-rooted 300,000 coffee trees in an attempt to grow food crops, partly to raise money, but the market for local food crops was undermined by cheap food imports and food aid from the wealthy countries” (Robbins, 2002: 271). As a matter of fact, local women farmers in Ruhango and Nyanza districts who used to sell potatoes and vegetables to boarding schools such as Byimana, Inderabarezi, and Nyanza high schools, lost their market due to a flow of “pate jaune” or yellow maize meal, soya meal and beans (mainly from France, Belgium and Italy) which were offered freely to boarding schools in Rwanda.

Moreover, under structural adjustment programmes, in Mayaga region, large scale farming and commercial crop production such as green beans and other vegetables that were cultivated especially by “Loiret” (a French organization) were promoted in Mayaga region, based on the assumption that productivity improvements are easier to obtain in the export as opposed to subsistence or locally-traded crops sector, and that the increase in income stemming from export production will ensure national food security. Nevertheless, from the

information of the respondents during the focus group on question two, this argument was controversial, given the fact that all the produce was exported to European markets, and the money from the produce was mismanaged by men in many households. The implications of this shift are many, especially for women who are concentrated in the subsistence sector and whose ability to move into export crops is limited by various constraints, as already noted previously. The cooperatives are concentrating on food production rather than cash crops for export, and link to the previous chapter, indicating that government policy has changed, that SAPs have been dropped and that production of food for local markets is being encouraged.

5.4.2 SLF assets portfolios for women in Mayaga region

Within the context of the vulnerabilities outlined above, women in Mayaga region have assets which can be mobilized to improve livelihoods. The SL framework is used to uncover these assets among women in Mayaga region cooperatives.

5.4.2.1 Social assets/capital

Social assets/capital refers to “the social resources upon which people draw in pursuit of their livelihood objectives, and it includes networks and connectedness, more formal group membership, reciprocity and exchange” (Chambers. 1989: 53). Social capital further refers to patronage, neighborhoods, and kinship, common rules and sanctions collective representation, mechanisms for participation in decision- making, and leadership (Vogel, C. 1998:www.uni-bonn.de/ihdp/lucc/publications/luccnews/news3). In its sociological version, social capital refers to “the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalised relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition - or in other words, to membership in a group” (Bourdieu and Waquant 1992:119). In other words, social capital refers to the power, influence, knowledge, and dispositions an individual acquires by virtue of membership in a network or group (ibid.). In the post-1994 Rwanda, social capital was weak in Mayaga region and in the whole of Rwanda as a result of the genocide that decreased trust and social cohesion between citizens. It is in this context that women’s involvement in cooperatives came as a solution to fulfill the gap in social capital caused by the genocide.

In post-1994 Rwanda, social capital was a very important resource for reconstruction. Working in cooperatives helped women to participate in decision-making. By participating in decision-making, women become more motivated and committed to personal change. Business planning within cooperatives forced women to develop decision-making skills if they chose to continue developing their cooperatives. Continuous exposure to this process over time develops women's understanding of how decisions are made, supporting them to apply that learning in their personal lives and ultimately giving them a sense of greater control in their lives. Table 17 illustrates how cooperatives by their nature work to promote women's participation in decision-making throughout their activities at all levels.

Table17: Participation of women in decision-making.

Total	Gender		Local government		NGOs				Coops leadership	
	M	F	District		Local		International		M	F
502	235	267	69	28 M	35 F		14 M		158	176
				41 F	28 M		15 F			
100%	45.8%	54.2%	M	F	M	F	M	F	47.3%	52.7%

The reality from the above table is that women are invited to participate in strategic planning and pursue participatory evaluation strategies in cooperatives. Women are encouraged to act as "board members" and many cooperatives are led by women, as chairpersons of the leading committees. From such experiences, some women from cooperatives were elected onto the local government committees in their areas. Hence, one can deduce that, apart from generating money, cooperatives encouraged women to be more active citizens, voicing their own insights into the programmes of the local government and into social assistance regulations or other policy issues, and working to change the problems they have identified.

Moreover, cooperatives provided an opportunity to organize women to work collaboratively with their peers who are in a similar vulnerability context and stage of transformation. To make this happen, women working in cooperatives in Mayaga region managed to make study tours at local (within the district and the province), national, and regional/international levels. Through study tours, women managed to make new connections with, and learn from the experience of other cooperatives. In fact, working with cooperatives from a different context and with different experience provides a more comfortable setting within which to explore

personal transformation. From arguments of the respondents on question three, due to the above connections, women involved in cooperatives in Mayaga region became less isolated, and developed a broader network for both business and personal support.

The response to question three indicates that 876 cooperative members made a study tour within their districts, 554 managed to make the same tour at provincial level, and 96 made it at national level (in other provinces), while 126 members made it in other African countries and out of Africa. Respondents on questions three and eight appreciated the way these tours benefited them, stating that social and business relations are vital to their work in cooperatives. In fact, women are often isolated and find it difficult to set up a meaningful social and business connections (i.e. mentors, sales links and financial advisors) to support their livelihood tasks. In view of the above, it is clear that facilitating the development of these connections is an excellent investment that organizations can make to support women's livelihood strategies.

Cooperatives are potentially democratic organizations, and the study found that this is indeed the case for cooperatives in the Mayaga region. In reality, a democratically organized and managed organization is favorable to women, as it is only in this kind of environment that they will be able to express their needs, articulate their interests and views, as well as seek equal and equitable rights and privileges with men. However, as highlighted earlier, to actualize this principle, the cooperatives must ensure that their members are able to live the principles of democracy. Indeed, gender, social, racial, political, and religion discrimination, which hamper many people from being rightfully represented in decision-making bodies, must be rejected and methodically addressed. Moreover, women with leadership potential, but who have been inhibited from developing and actualizing their capacities because of the effects, for instance, of gender stereotyping, must be acknowledged and given assistance for self-transformation. For instance, aside from ensuring that tasking and responsibilities are based on qualifications, and not on gender biases, the cooperatives have undertaken a process of training cooperatives' members and committees, and this will enable members and potential leaders to bring out and use their leadership capacities.

An example of the effectiveness of this mechanism is the process the Rwandan women's movement initiated around the ratification of the new constitution. To elicit concerns, interests and suggestions regarding a new constitution, Pro-Femmes held consultations with

its member NGOs and women at the grass-roots level. They then met with representatives of the Ministry of Gender and Women in Development and the Forum of Women Parliamentarians to report members' concerns. Together the three sectors contributed to a policy paper that recommended specific actions to make the constitution gender-sensitive and increase women's representation in government, which was submitted to the Constitutional Commission (Berte Mukamusoni, cited in MINALOC Report, 2007: 14)

5.4.2.2 Financial capital

From the observation of the researcher during the fieldwork, women's financial capital in Mayaga region is from three main sources. Firstly, they find money through an asset-based approach. This means that, before relying on the help of outsiders, members of the cooperatives are active agents rather than being passive beneficiaries, or relying heavily on the efforts of external agents. In view of this, every member of the cooperative gives a monthly contribution of Rwf 200 (R 4.00), an amount that even the poorest of the cooperative members can find. Firstly, for a cooperative of 100 members, they put together Rwf 20000 (R400.00) every month; the point here is that this Rwf 20000 is enough to buy the inputs for their production – something they would not individually be able to do. Secondly, once the products have been harvested or made, another source of capital is the money the cooperative gets after selling their produce, after the harvest for agricultural cooperatives, and from selling baskets for basket-weavers. The members of cooperatives get that money in forms of dividends. Thirdly, individual cooperative members can borrow money from the cooperative – and use this money to generate profits through small projects mostly run at home; this being the second source of capital. Hence, instead of borrowing money from banks or micro-financiers, women borrow money from their cooperatives, which also, in this situation- play the role of micro-financier for their members.

On the other hand, all the cooperatives borrowed money from banks and micro-financiers because the contributions of members are insufficient to meet their needs. Looking at the table 15 below, one can ask some questions. Are micro-financiers empowering or disempowering? To what extent do loans, credits and grants help cooperatives or individual members attain self-reliance or empowerment? Table 18 below shows the situation of loans within the 12 cooperatives which serve as the sample of cooperatives in Mayaga region.

Table 18: the situation of loan payment

Coops in debt	Situation of loans in Rwanda Franc (Rwf) (1 R= 65 Rwf)					The situation of payment of the loans by coops		
	From Banks	From Micro- finances	Total of loans	Paid	Balance to pay	Regular payment	Irregular payments	Cases in court
7/12 58%	17672891	58342176	76015067	53869427	22145640	3(42,8%)	3(42, 8%)	1(14,4%)

The reality illustrated in the fieldwork is that micro-financiers give loans to cooperatives, sometimes with exorbitant interest rates that can quickly plunge cooperatives (or individual women) into financial difficulties during the early stages of their business. From an individual interview with the Gender Desk officer in Nyanza district, she revealed that some cooperatives can use loans effectively, mostly because they are trained before taking the loan. Responding to questions two and three, respondents from the focus group indicated that the largest obstacle to credit faced by individual women continues to be the restricted rights of marriage in community of property. They argued that married women still require the consent of their husbands to enter into contracts and loans. Few institutions have sought to address this problem, by advising women to be involved in cooperatives, because the cooperative department in the district can play a link for them to get loans from micro-financiers or banks.²⁵

However finding shows that, although women prefer borrowing money from their cooperatives because they do not charge interest, as the number of borrowers increases, the capital of the cooperative decreases, and then cooperatives become unable to satisfy the needs of all the applicants. It is in this situation that cooperatives (or individual women) take loans from banks or micro-financiers. However, cooperatives and individual women must use and safeguard the good reputation that banks and micro-financiers have towards them.

²⁵ Interview with the key informant, Gender Desk officer in Nyanza district (Nyanza, March 2009)

When the researcher visited the Economic Planning Department and Gender Desk in Nyanza district, the Gender Desk officer witnessed that the local “Nyanza Banque Populaire” (a community-based bank) and Nyanza micro-financiers prefer to give loans to women members as they believe that they are better and more reliable borrowers, thereby contributing to their financial viability. The Gender Desk in Nyanza district highlighted that experience showed that when loans are channeled through women’s groups, substantial shifts in decision-making patterns are observed within many households and gender-based violence cases decrease. This involves a remarkable shift from norm-following and male decision-making towards more bargaining and sole female decision-making within the household.²⁶

Micro-finance institutions offer access to credit to low-income households, specifically targeting women, and to some extent, meet poverty reduction and women’s empowerment objectives. From the researcher’s observation at the fieldwork, even though most microfinance programmes target women with the claim that their goal is to be empowering, sometimes the reality is different, especially when they distribute loans to women individually or to cooperatives that are not trained on how to use the money. However, in spite of some cases, small loans can be very effective in empowering women. From the researcher’s observation during the fieldwork, one could state that investing in women’s capabilities empowers them to make choices, which is valuable in itself, and also contributes to greater economic growth and development. During the focus group from KOMANTO cooperative, 12 out of 15 respondents (80%) witnessed that through the cooperative, they managed to increase the income of their households, as well as the overall health and economic welfare of their families.²⁷

5.4.2.3 Human assets

Human capital refers to “the stock of competences, knowledge and personality attributes embodied in the ability to perform labor so as to produce economic value. It is the attributes gained by a worker through education and experience” (Gary S. Becker, 1993: 77).

As table 19 (next page) mentions, 1673 women and 203 men from the 12 cooperatives which are the sample of this research, were informally trained in different fields. We have also seen

²⁶ Interview with a key informant from gender desk office in Nyanza district (ibid.)

²⁷ Interview with a focus group of KOPANTO cooperative , Ruhango district (interview held on February 24th, 2009)

that cooperative members could learn skills from study tours. In fact, the information from respondents during the focus group on question six shows that) On 15th January 2009, a cooperative in Gisagara district visited a prisoners' cooperative in Muhanga district, and learnt how they cultivate vegetables on a small piece of land, using plastics, with impressive outcomes. Individual people around Gisagara district were learning in turn from that cooperative, after they implemented that system of cultivating vegetables in a small garden.²⁸

A cooperative from Nyanza district visited another cooperative in Bugesera which is using a system of irrigation that consists of storing water when it is raining for use during the dry season. They learnt how to make water tanks with cheap materials. This system of learning from one another empowered a number of cooperatives in the Mayaga region. Table 19 (next page) shows the situation of training and the fields in which cooperatives' members were trained.

Table 19: Training of cooperative members

N. of trainees	Trainees by gender		Field of training F = female M = male N. = number Coops = cooperatives					Trainer	Source of Funding
	M	F	Unity & rec.	HIV/AIDS	Public health	Project manag.	Alphab.		
1876	203	1673	335 F	334 F	335 F	334F	335 F	-Local gov. - Coops Members	20% NGOs & Local gov.
			41 M	40 M	41 M	40 M	41 M		

Project manag. = project management

Local gov. = local government

Alphab. = alphabetisation

The above Table 19 indicates that 70% of the cost of the training is covered by cooperative members, meaning they organize the place to meet, in most cases, in the open air, instead of paying for a hall for training. Furthermore, they bring their own lunch, instead of paying for meals in restaurants. On the other side, NGOs and the local government contribute to the trainings with 20% of the budget, mostly in terms of paying for transport for trainers or giving papers and pens to the trainees. This is once again an asset-based community

²⁸ The focus group interview held on 15th January, 2009

development, given the fact that the human capital of the members of cooperatives is built 'from inside out'. It is thus a community-driven development rather than development driven by external agencies. This does not mean that outsiders are not needed, but rather that they are not the key actors in people's development.

Beine et al. (2008) shows that the concept of human capital was developed in the 1960s and is founded on the idea that hard work, education, and skills development all lead to more output (Beine et al. 2008: 631-652). As a result, companies were encouraged to invest in human capital through various means such as education and bonuses for exceptionally good work, among others. As a manager, developing your people has a double benefit. Obviously, you increase their ability to contribute to the performance of your organisation. But more importantly, "the more you invest in your good people the more likely they will be to stay with you for even more development" (Beine et al. *ibid*: 631-652). Efforts at increasing levels of human capital, particularly through the education of children and women, have enjoyed a great deal of success in developing countries across the globe (Brown, 2003: 57). One of the most important realizations in development policy over the past twenty years is that there is nothing more important than investing in human beings. But human capital has a new meaning today – "it means developing the potential of human beings to the fullest" (Brown, *ibid*. 65).

In view of the above, apart from the skills learnt through semi-formal training as shown in table 6, women involved in cooperatives in Mayaga region learned some skills through business planning and implementation in their respective cooperatives, and this promoted a holistic asset development, building skills through women's practical experience. The business development process includes financial management, operations and marketing components that support development in all asset areas. From the earliest stages of the activities in cooperatives, women are encouraged to assess all of their livelihood assets and to make informed decisions about their needs. The office of cooperatives in the districts in this context is proactive in meeting these needs, offering skills development training often supplemented with "just-in-time" workshops and individualized technical assistance coaching.

Hence, one can say that women have different skills and experiences that can be used for the pursuit of their livelihood strategies, but sometimes don't get a chance to use their potential,

due to some constraints as mentioned earlier in chapter one. This is corroborated by the findings from this research. Indeed, in the rural areas of Mayaga, the patriarchal environment and traditions still handicap women from exercising some skills. As a matter of fact, respondents' views on question one testified that some young women among cooperatives' members specifically, women in Mayaga region generally and in Rwanda as a whole are able to ride a bicycle, but cannot use them to fetch water as the community sees this as unusual.

Briefly, from table 21, one can argue that cooperatives in Mayaga region promote capacity building and human investment through the members' training and education programmes in various topics of members' interest. Through cooperatives' developmental education, members become conscious of their individual value and responsibility, they increase self-respect, self-reliance, self-esteem, and are trained to have trust in their fellow co-operators. Thus, cooperatives have done a tremendous job in training women in Mayaga region. In fact, a key informant informed that the committees of 9 cooperatives out of 12 cooperatives (about 75%) were trained on basics of accounting, reports writing and other skills that help them as leaders. Together with the Department of Cooperatives Development, training of both leaders and management staff has been done to ensure ethical and accountable leadership and good governance among cooperatives in Mayaga region.²⁹ As table 22 (p.213) shows, all the members of the cooperatives were trained in a way or another. In other words, when we look at the constraints met by cooperatives, and compare to successes, one can argue that the successes of cooperatives greater than the constraints, due different achievements as we find in tables 19 & 20 (p.210 &211) and from different focus groups and key informants interviews.

5.4.2.4 Natural assets

Whether in Mayaga region, or Rwanda as a whole, women's knowledge of and reliance upon the environment make them the primary managers of natural resources such as forests, water, soil and vegetation. However, women are also the principal victims of the deforestation, erosion and degradation scarring Rwanda's environment.

²⁹ Interview with a key informant from CARE International (ibid.)

The information provided by respondents on questions two, three and five revealed firewood shortages, dreadful conditions for croplands, increasing dams and river levels encroaching on croplands, and poor water quality as key hindrances to development. They further identified ecological challenges as a major constituent of these problems, and they acknowledged numerous vicious cycles compounding the economic and environmental threats to Mayaga region women. During the focus group discussions, respondents proposed solutions including investment in natural capital in the form of reforestation activities, investment in human capital in the form of upholding more proficient wood stoves along with rising public awareness of environmental pressure, and investments in social capital in the form of inter-institutional coordination to tackle environmental challenges. Rwanda adopted a system of “umuganda”³⁰ which helps a great deal in addressing the issue.

“Umuganda” is a kind of social action, whether it be cleaning litter from the streets, or doing some other kind of community action such as clearing bushes and long grass from a forest (which is often a haven for 'unsavoury elements' such as drug users who are using the unwieldy undergrowth as cover from the police.) The same place can host mosquitoes which can cause malaria. After the “Umuganda” is over, the whole community meets in the woods for an open air 'town hall' type meeting, in which local politicians talk about the importance of family planning and hygiene. The whole purpose of “Umuganda” is not just social action, but also to bring people together - to unify.

From an individual interview with a Care International coordinator in the Southern Province, it can be seen that Care International is one of the organisations that tries to respond to environmental problems in the Southern province, with the use of gender-sensitive approaches in the water and energy programmes. From the experience of Care International, poor women and children are more seriously affected by environmental hazards and environmental degradation than any other groups. Women and girls also excessively suffer the negative effects of poor energy services - the serious health problems caused by internal

³⁰ In Rwanda, on the last Saturday of the month, there is a mandatory work fest from 7:00am to noon, called *Umuganda*. It is a Rwandan tradition that dates back to long before colonial times. During *Umuganda* (literally meaning "contribution"); every able-bodied person aged 18 years or older is supposed to participate in the unpaid communal work.

air pollution, the quantity of time and effort spent in gathering fuel wood and fetching water, and the lack of electricity.³¹

A key component of food, water, and energy shortages is the massive ecological degradation Mayaga region has suffered over many centuries, in particular the loss of forest cover. In fact, until 1954, two-thirds of Mayaga region was a natural reserve, and at present, only an estimated 2% of the land is not used for farming (World Bank Global Monitoring report, 10 March 1997). Population pressures, economic challenges, land-intensive agricultural practices - especially among poor pastoralists and farmers - have interacted to create vicious cycles of land management, ecological problems and the deterioration of precious natural capital, in turn worsening the poverty and vulnerability context for women in the Mayaga region. The reality is that lack of natural capital is the central limiting factor not in the development of Mayaga region, but also of the country as a whole. In fact, due to the small size of the country (see chapter one) and the high population growth, almost all the land is used for farming and making Rwanda short of natural assets in terms of land.

However, while organisations like Care International give positive environmental solutions in Rwanda, Boocock (2002) shows that the current development paradigm focuses almost exclusively on investments in built capital, funded by overseas investors, and largely ignores the importance of natural, human, and social capital in development efforts as their focus is economic growth and profit maximisation (Boocock, 2002: 157)

The work of Nobel Prize winner Maathai (2007) in particular has shown that the reinforcement of natural capital through reforestation projects can lead to dramatic improvements in the quality of life of adjacent communities. Maathai's now-famous Green Belt Movement saw “more than 100,000 rural Africans - mostly women - plant 30 million trees, including fruit trees to improve nutrition and supplement incomes, as well as native species and fuel wood species used to reforest thousands of hectares of degraded land in Kenya and beyond” (Maathai, 2007: 29). Her organization further showed that investments in human and natural capital are possible even when financial resources are scarce – “her rural force of so-called ‘foresters-without-diplomas’ eschewed modern capital-intensive tree

³¹ Interview with a key informant at Care International Nyamagabe (March 16th, 2009)

propagation techniques, and they spread knowledge without formal training or certification in forestry” (Maathai, *ibid.* p. 35). They instead built upon their own skills and knowledge, and worked within the resource opportunities and constraints at hand to transform negative cycles of poverty and resource degradation into positive cycles of knowledge expansion and forest re-growth (Maathai, *ibid.* 37).

The main causes of deforestation in Mayaga community include the expansion of agricultural land for annual crop production; the extraction of fuel and construction wood from the forest; the growth of some towns and villages; and illegal settlement within protected natural forests in the region (MINALOC, 2007). Compounded by a high rate of population growth, these factors have continued to aggravate soil erosion and siltation, biodiversity loss and overall land degradation. The current trend is towards decreasing productivity and the irreversible degradation of the interconnected and interdependent ecosystems in the lakes and river watersheds in Mayaga region (Uvin, 1996a: 7-15).

Rural poverty further perpetuates the destruction of the resource base. Many women recognize that deforestation and other practices are harmful and even have the knowledge to promote conservation. But in the absence of economic and technological alternatives, women see no other means of survival. According to a report from MINAGRI (2008), a recent survey of fishing along the local lakes and rivers found that many respondents felt that the use of mosquito nets for fishing is contributing to the decline of fish stocks. Despite this, many continue to use the nets, explaining that they cannot afford to buy meat and can no longer catch enough fish to feed the family with traditional methods (Minagri, 2008). In the same context, Care International mentioned the case of Nyungwe natural forest destruction by people who give the intended use as for firewood, highlighting that they don't have an alternative fuel source. Nevertheless, cooperatives in Mayaga region have played a major role in using sustainable practices and reversing the above trends.

The Care International coordinator highlighted that women in Mayaga region (and elsewhere) are the primary users of natural resources (land, forest, and water), as they are the ones responsible for gathering fuel, cooking food and fetching water. Women are the ones to spend most of their time working on the farms to feed the household. Having such responsibility on their shoulders leads them to learn more about soil, trees, plants and the way

to protect them as a livelihood strategy. Care International launched a project called “Amashyiga” or cooker project, but using “Nyiramugengeri” or turbine which is found in Mayaga region . The aim is not only to protect the environment, but to help women in saving time that they use for finding firewood. Women from cooperatives were also taught how to treat water by boiling it before family use, and by extension how to protect water sources in their areas.

The Care International projects officer revealed that women are more committed to environmental protection, as they excessively suffer the consequences of poor energy services and the severe health problems caused by indoor air pollution. Women are primarily affected by the lack of electricity and the great amount of time and efforts spent in fetching water and gathering fuel wood. The promotion of participatory resource planning, together with the strengthening policy and regulatory frameworks to protect poor women’s access to natural resources, and shifting the focus from energy supply to the provision of energy services (heating, illumination) will help not only help women, but the environment as well. As argued by the Care International coordinator in the Southern province that encompasses Mayaga region, the energy can be used as an entry point to address multiple development objectives, including social (women’ empowerment and emancipation), economic (poverty reduction) and environmental issues (indoor air pollution, and land use) . Care is working closely with Kigali Institute of Technology (KIST) on this programme, and the only way to reach, mobilise and train people is through cooperatives.

7.4.2.5 Physical assets

It is clear that a basic level of security, shelter, food and clothing is required as a foundation for asset building. Women working in cooperatives in Mayaga region decided to be involved in cooperatives as a strategy to obtain that foundation. According to the table 20 (p.226), one can see that before their involvement in cooperatives, 35 % of respondents had problems of shelter. Two years after, only 18.4 % had problems of shelter and the decline in problems was due to joining cooperatives. In other words, while working in cooperatives, women continue to improve their foundation of basic needs while building assets for the future. When supporting women to meet their basic needs, both local government and NGOs working in the field of gender or women’s empowerment can build self-advocacy and problem solving skills, supporting women to resolve problems with housing, health, food and other basic

requirements. In addition, local government can partner with other agencies to ensure that women access the social support to which they are entitled.

Another form of physical capital (which is at the same time natural capital) is land. According to 16 (p.191), land is an asset without which women cannot earn their livelihood. In what is called in Kinyarwanda “ibisigara” (“igisigara” is from the verb- “gusigara” - or to remain) or communal land, most of the cooperatives borrow land from the local government, and work on it for a specific time under a contract. There is no accurate data on landlessness in Rwanda generally and in Mayaga region specifically, however, the fieldwork showed that while it is commonly assumed that most households do have access to land under customary law, some landless widows were forced to move into the households of relatives just after the 1994 genocide.

Current local government strategies in the wetlands of Mayaga region target increasing the land available to communal farmers and improving the productivity of the existing land base, through improved range management, crop production or alternative uses. Efforts have been made by local government to increase land availability by opening up communal lands “which are underutilised due to a lack of surface water” (Agarwal 1997).

From the visit to Nyamiyaga cooperative in Kamonyi district, it is clear that women who own or control economic assets, particularly land and housing, are better positioned to improve their lives and to deal efficiently with their vulnerability context. This cooperative farms cassava by using members’ land in their farming process. Those who free their land for the use of the cooperative have some benefits after the harvest. By owning their home and land, women directly gain from benefits such as better use of the land and higher incomes, as well as a secure place to live. In addition, if women possess their own land (not communal land borrowed from local government) or have their own house, they can use these physical assets as collateral for credit during a financial crisis or to invest in a small business or other income generating venture. From the views of respondents on questions one and three, it can be seen that asset control is also established to give women greater bargaining power within households and protect against the risk of violence. This is corroborated in other contexts; research in Kerala, India, found that “49 percent of women with no property reported physical violence at home compared to only 7 percent of women who owned property”

(Panda 2002: 78). For all of these reasons, property and inheritance rights create the enabling conditions to empower women.

Findings from Mayaga region show that women have gained greater control over physical assets through the cooperatives. Indeed, 20 focus-groups out of 22 (about 90.91%) witnessed that joining cooperatives was a good way for women to of access “ibisigara” or a free land belonging to the government, as men. This land can be borrowed temporary from the local government by cooperatives. Before 1994, this land was exclusively exploited by whether individual local investors or cooperatives which were exclusively or dominantly men.

7.4.2.6 Spiritual assets

According to Penda (2002, “spiritual capital is a concept that involves the quantification of the value to individuals, groups and society of spiritual, moral or psychological beliefs and practices” (Penda, 2002: 95). The Metanexus Institute defines spiritual capital as "the effects of spiritual and religious practices, beliefs, networks and institutions that have a measurable impact on individuals, communities and societies" (Panda, 2002: *ibid.*). As a complement, Berger and Hefner (2003) show that spiritual capital is the power, influence and dispositions created by a person or an organization’s spiritual belief, knowledge and practice (Berger and Hefner, 2003: http://www.metanexus.net/spiritual_capital/pdf/Berger.pdf).

In the context of cooperatives in Mayaga region, 8 out of 12 of the cooperatives start their activities with a prayer and/or close with a prayer after cooperative activities. This is not something to be undermined. When asked how prayer helps them in their activities, they said in Kinyarwanda “Imana ni byose” or ‘God is everything’. Some respondents on question three even testified surviving because of their faith in Jesus. Outside of cooperative activities, some members of the cooperatives meet again in the church or in prayer groups, whether they attend the same church or they have a prayer group in their village. Some respondents argued that they help each not only because they are in the same situation of poverty, but because it is the word of God: “If there is among you a poor man, one of your brethren, in any of your towns within your land which The Lord your God gives you, you shall not harden your heart or shut your hand against your poor brother, but you shall open your hand to him, and lend him sufficient for his need, whatever it may be” (Deuteronomy 15:7-8 RSV). This is both a spiritual and social asset that must not be ignored. Hence, organizations working in the field

of gender and development must not ignore the introduction of faith-inspired motives in community development generally, and in women's empowerment specifically.

One can argue that the April 2005 conference in Oslo was held in this context. The conference was organized by the World Bank and church leaders and dealt with the roles of religious NGOs in development work. In fact, Marshall and Keough (2005) mention that the World Bank over its 60-year history, had remarkably little professional contact at either global or local levels with the world of faith and the people who work in it (Marshall and Keough, 2005: 55). The researcher's 10 years experience working in the field of community development showed that faith perspectives - including the active roles of religious institutions that own land, run schools, assist poor people, and care for orphans and disabled people - were often invisible to development teams working with and for the community. That oversight often resulted from preconceptions about differing roles, although it sometimes reflected suspicions that faith institutions stood against development goals. In view of the above, the above conference in Oslo is perhaps a way for the World Bank to acknowledge that financial capital alone is not enough. Indeed, both faith communities and the World Bank have poverty eradication as their main mission.

Weighing it from a Christian perspective, Jaykumar Christian built on Chambers and Friedman by describing poverty as a "system of disempowerment that creates oppressive relationships and whose fundamental causes are spiritual" (Chambers, 1989: 65). Therefore, this reinforces the view of Bryant who observes that the poverty of Africa can be viewed as entanglement, and this is a situation where interconnected systems (including spiritual crisis) result in a poverty trap (Bryant, 1999: 67). Thus, the reality is that you cannot disentangle yourself from one without dealing with its interrelationship with the others. Therefore, this implies that "material poverty, physical weakness, isolation, vulnerability, powerlessness, and spiritual poverty all work to reinforce the chains of poverty" (Chambers, *ibid.* 73).

The reality is that, if there is any institution that understands lives and identifies with the poor, it is the church. In addition, when the church talks of the poor, it is no one else than its own members, and hence, it is the church of the poor and with the poor. Experience shows that the poor trust the church; they understand its motives, leadership and language, and it is this familiarity that offers the church a privilege to help the afflicted and the poor spiritually.

In this way, faith becomes an asset that the church and social workers can use to bring hope to people who come to it for help.

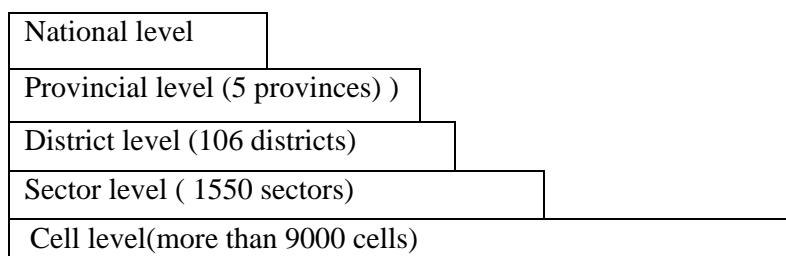
7.5 Policies, processes and institutions

This section examines the impact of policies on the livelihoods and daily life of women working in cooperatives in Mayaga region. The focus is on policies on women's participation in decision-making, and on gender-based violence or women's abuse. It is argued that, since women have the right to participate in decision-making and in a secure environment, their empowerment will be sustainable.

7.5.1 Impact of policies, institutions and processes on women's participation in decision-making

The achievement of women in Mayaga region in terms of decision-making and access to community capital was the outcome of the reform of policies, processes and institutions by the government of Rwanda. It has devised innovative structures to promote women's participation in governance at all administrative levels—from the smallest cell to the sector, district, provincial, and national levels.

Diagram 2: Government structures



This inclusion is not limited to the national level, but can be seen at the grassroots, at sector and cell levels. The participation of women in the committees of the cooperatives and in other community structures was documented through the focus groups (see Table 17, p 204).

Women from the twelve sampled cooperatives participate in decision-making in the local government and in central government's committees/ commissions/councils, in the committees of NGOs that work with the community, and in their own cooperatives. The

combined level of participation of women in different activities of the society is 54.1% vs. 46.81 for men (see Table 17, p.204). This level of participation is motivated by different reforms and policies in Rwanda, which take into consideration the role of women. These statistics show the participation of women at local level is equivalent to that of representation of women in the national parliament (54%), as a result of women's empowerment policies.

While 54% of women are represented on the cooperatives' executive committees, women make up more than 75% of the cooperatives' membership. In spite of the gap between the percentage of women's membership and their participation in the committees, women still have a voice in cooperatives through their electoral majority. In other words, while women may elect men as their representatives, men cannot use their leadership to oppress women as they are the ones who give them power and who can hold them to account and, if necessary, take it away from them through elections. We can compare this participation to another cooperative, "TWISEUNGANE" in Rwanda, where the membership in 1990 was 85% men and 15% women, and the committee constituted by 87% men and 13% women (IZABILIZA, 2003: <http://www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/>).

It should also be noted that 57.5% of women from cooperatives participate in leadership in different positions at community level and 42.5 % of men from cooperatives participate in leadership positions at community level (see table17, p.204). From these facts, it can be deduced that there has been significant progress in women's participation in decision-making through cooperative organisations in the post-1994 period. Indeed, promoting equal participation of women and men in decision-making and empowering cooperatives is one of the priorities of the Rwandan government, and women used this opportunity to learn new skills and enter new fields of work, which in turn, has empowered them run for and get elected to offices of political leadership, in addition to helping them to become economic providers and civil society leaders.

While government policies have facilitated women's participation, women's meaningful participation in the management of the society and the country as a whole, in turn affects both the range of policy issues that are considered and the types of solutions that are proposed. Research indicates that a legislator's gender has a distinct impact on policy priorities, making it critical that women are present in politics to represent the concerns of women and other marginalized citizens and help improve the responsiveness of policy-making and governance

(Izabiriza, 2003: <http://www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/>). As more women reach leadership positions within their political parties, these parties tend to prioritize issues that impact health, education and other quality of life issues. There is strong evidence (Izabiriz, 2003: *ibid.*) that as more women are elected to office, there is a corollary increase in policy-making that reflects the priorities of families, women, and ethnic and racial minorities. Women's political participation has profound positive and democratic impacts on communities, legislatures, political parties, and citizen's lives.

5.5.2 Impact of policies, institutions and processes on Gender-Based Violence (GBV)

Although cases of gender-based violence (GBV) and women's abuse can still be seen in the Mayaga region, the achievement of women's cooperatives in fighting GBV is immensely impressive. As one can see in table 20, from 2007 to 2010, gender-based violence and abuse of women cooperatives' members reduced dramatically after they joined cooperatives.

Table 20: Change in incidents of gender-based violence within cooperatives members

Coops memb.	Period	Number of incidents and identity of the perpetrators			Level of intervention	
		Husbands	Relatives	Unidentified	Police	Civil society
Total:						
5568	2007	935	135	47	40%	60%
4132 female	2008	632	65	19	35%	75%
1454 male	2009	297	31	21	32%	78%
	Sept. 2010	6	8	12	20%	80%
	Average	-	-	-	31.75%	68.25%

From table 20, it is clear that women contribute to solving their problems (such as gender-based violence) in more than two-thirds (68%) of cases, while the police intervene in 32% of cases of gender-based violence in Mayaga region. This shows once again how women must

be agents in their own empowerment and development. As long as they are backed by policies, institutions and processes, and the national police that has gender desks even at the lowest level, women can have an enabling environment that allows them to be the first and most efficient interveners in responding to their own challenges.

The evidence in table 20 that shows how gender-based violence (GBV) reduced significantly from 2007 to September 2010 within cooperatives' members in Mayaga region. According to the views of the respondents on question one, gender-based violence among cooperatives members was fuelled by the traditional gender norms that sustain male superiority and power, the social norms that accept or justify violence against women, fragile community sanctions against perpetrators, the poverty of women that makes them dependent on men to survive, and above all, the lack of a clear policy on gender-based violence.³²

While the police play an important role, findings from the fieldwork in Mayaga region revealed that the community remains the key actor in issues that affect it, and that a good policy can be a vessel for success. As shown earlier, the law on rape changed in 1997, to stipulate that cases of rape during the 1994 genocide be treated as war weapons, and therefore punishable as war crimes and crimes against humanity. However, the law alone is not enough, without mobilizing the community for fighting such crimes. In view of this, respondents on questions two and five informed that they have among their members those who are part of *Imboni ya jenda* or “the open eye of gender” (a gender monitoring committee at the village level) and community policing initiatives. Due to this strategy, respondents generally approved that they have been sensitized about human rights, and they are now helping in apprehending the wrongdoers. The above report from the National Police shows that the general crime rate reduced by 50.3 percent since 2005 - from 11 762 to 5845 cases registered by June 2010 (New Times- Rwanda, 26 July 2010: <http://www.newtimes.co.rw>)

New structures and institutions have also contributed to the success of cooperatives in reducing gender-based violence within their members. Firstly, community policing is a network of the local community working with a unit of the police to fight gender-based violence. Secondly, the CNF (Conseil National des Femmes – National Council of Women) has councils at the grassroots level, whose main duty is to monitor gender implementation

³² Interview with a focus group B from COAMANYA cooperative, Nyanza district (interview held on 19th March, 2009)

and gender-based violence issues in the district. Thirdly, there is a gender desk in the police station of every district in Rwanda. Fourthly, there is “Imboni ya” gender (or the open eye of gender), constituted by people elected locally called “inyangamugayo” (or the council of the wise) which also deals with GBV. These councils are elected by the community itself and where the committees are mixed, the percentage of women must be at least 30% (according to the law), but it was observed during the fieldwork in Mayaga region that women are always above 50% in these councils.

Success is also attributed to the inclusivity in different community committees some of whom were mentioned in the previous section. Apart from the women’s councils, all other structures are mixed (women and men work together). Above all, every cooperative has an informal counseling committee, which deals with issues of women and child abuse within cooperative members. In some cases, members engaged in such actions are warned, blamed and in the final instance, expelled from the coop. These cooperative counseling committees work both with security structures of the local government (mostly the police) and with the local women’s councils.

These women’s councils are constituted by ten members, including representatives for legal affairs, civic education, health, and finance. Rather than a policy implementation function, these councils have an advocacy role. They are involved in skills training and making local women aware of their rights, as well as in advising the generally elected bodies on issues that affect women and taking women’s concerns to them. These councils ensure that women’s views on education, health, security, and other issues are articulated to local authorities. While the women’s councils are important in terms of decentralisation and grassroots engagement, lack of resources prevents them from maximising their impact. Given the fact that members of local women’s councils are not paid, and because they must volunteer in addition to performing their paid work and family responsibilities, the councils are less effective and less sustainable than they could be.

According to views on question five, respondents are happy with the above councils due to their philosophy of accepting and supporting the implementation of strategies aimed at fighting the causes of crime and social conflicts that target women, in partnership with the police and the civil society. In fact, these councils tend to focus on local problem identification and solutions, with community involvement as an essential ingredient.

Moreover, respondents made it clear that these councils provide a model, which enables under-empowered victims, often women, girls and the poor, with a voice to express their views. The goal of all the policies on women's empowerment in Rwanda is bringing about the advancement, development and empowerment of women. These policies are widely disseminated so as to encourage active participation of all stakeholders in achieving their goals.

Hence, it is vital to understand that policy, structure and process reform in Rwanda has defined people's livelihood options and motivated people generally and women specifically to participate in decision-making structures, locally and nationally. Livelihoods for women in Mayaga region are shaped by policies, institutions and processes at all levels, from their households to their activities in the cooperatives. This determines not only access to the various types of capital (natural, physical, human, social and financial), but also the substitutability of capitals. Table 21 (p.227) shows how policies, institutions and processes on the process in Rwanda created an environment helped women to be involved in decision-making in and out of cooperatives. Indeed, women involved in cooperatives' members participate in the leadership of cooperatives, in different committees of the local government, and in some committees that link NGOs (national or international) with the community in Mayaga region.

Policies, constitutions and processes determine options for livelihood strategies, as well as access to decision-making bodies and external sources of influence. Organisations, in both the public and private sectors, decide and implement policies, legislation and regulations, and undertake activities, that affect livelihoods. Lowe and Schilderman (2001) indicate that processes determine the way in which institutions, and individuals, operate and interact (Lowe and Schilderman, 2001: <http://www.home.asp?id=pipIntro1home.asp?id=>). The achievement of women in leadership positions mentioned in table 17 (p.205) shows how policies, institutions and processes operate at all levels and in all spheres, both public and private, and they influence significantly the conditions that promote the achievement of multiple livelihood strategies and sustainable livelihoods. Additionally, Bingen (2000) mentions that policies determines the degree to which an enabling or facilitating environment for livelihoods is in place, compared to an inhibiting or restrictive one (Bingen, 2000).

The arguments of the respondents on questions two, three and five show how the constitutions and processes are significant in determining who benefits from access to a range

of assets, and in influencing the useful value of each asset. Hence, livelihood strategies and outcomes for women in Mayaga region are not just dependent on access to capital assets or controlled by the vulnerability context; they are also changed by the environment of structures and processes set by both the local government and the central government.³³

Hobley (2001) makes it clear that policy-determining structures cannot be effective in the absence of appropriate institutions and processes through which policies can be implemented (Hobley, 2001: 74). Processes are important to every aspect of livelihoods. In the context of women working in cooperatives in Mayaga region, processes provide incentives that stimulate them to make better choices or better livelihood strategies. By contrast, before the reform of the policy on cooperatives in 2007, processes could grant or deny access to assets. As a matter of fact, respondents on question three highlights the issue of ownership of the cooperatives by members after the new policy, as opposed to the period before the new policy whereby the department of cooperatives in the local government used to interfere in the cooperatives' functioning. This is a proof that the main problems the poor and vulnerable face is that "the processes which frame their livelihoods may systematically restrict them unless the government adopts pro-poor policies that, in turn, filter down to legislation and even less formal processes" (DFID ,1997). Hence, the achievement of women working in cooperatives in Mayaga region is achieved not only through their hard work, but through empowering policies, institutions and processes that allowed them to go beyond the cultural practices that constrain their livelihood strategies.

Table 21: Results of policies to address gender issues in Mayaga province

Gender issue Variable	Indicators	Policies	Positive results in Mayaga
Time burden	Time allocation for women and men on different activities.	Better access to transport facilities, water supply, labour saving devices	Improvement in freedom of movement for women
Employment	Labor force participation rate, employment rate, unemployment rate, wage gap between women and	Policies and programs to reduce time burdens; labor market legislation protecting	No barrier to employment for women

³³ The focus group interview (February 2009)

	men.	women	
Productive assets	Ownership of land and other productive assets (capital, technology), access to financial resources (credits), access to information related to production (i.e. agricultural extension)	Property rights legislation, eliminating legal barriers to ownership of assets and access to credits, micro-credits programs.	Women inherit land as men; women can get credits for their projects as men do.
Education	Schooling participation, completion, educational attainment, learning achievement, literacy	Scholarship programs, policies to reduce time burdens	Literacy, scholarships for girls.
Training	Access to training programs	Vocational training opportunities, apprenticeship programs	1673 women and 203 men were trained in different fields.
Health and nutrition	Access to health and nutrition services, morbidity, nutritional mortality indicators	Social policy	-
Personal security	Violence against women	Gender awareness programs for police and prosecutors, judges and lawyers, and professionals e.g. health providers, counsellors	Cases of gender-based violence reduced from 935 in 2007 to 6 in 2010
Decision-making	Participation in decision making bodies at national, local, and community levels, in government and non-government organizations	Gender sensitive constitution, poverty eradication policy.	235 men and 267 women in leadership positions.

(i) Some cultural constraints to policy implementation in Mayaga region

While culture is dynamic in urban areas of Rwanda, the proverbs and anecdotes below are still a reality in many rural areas of Rwanda, including Mayaga region.

Tradition and culture impact on livelihoods in terms of the risks and vulnerability context of women, influencing structures and processes (such as gender roles and relations, societal

norms, organisations, and traditional politics), right to use and to have power over assets, success and choice of livelihood strategies, priorities for livelihood outcomes, and the incentives that people respond to. Paradoxically, livelihoods also impact on culture, and culture changes with new ways of living. Crocombe (1972: 1-15) highlights that “Culture is a process, not a state and evolves over time”. Development projects in Mayaga region and in many other rural areas in Rwanda have always met challenges, and some researchers have identified institutional issues, along with socio-cultural issues as the main causes of project failure (Schoeffel, 1996). It is not only in Rwanda, but in many African societies, that culture is cited as an impediment to economic development (Hooper and James, 1994). For example, sharing and distribution of food and money, the influence of the Church, the power and status of individuals, and gender issues have all been cited as reasons why small businesses failed in Mayaga region. Nevertheless, rather than culture being regarded as an obstacle, it needs to be the basis of a more sustainable, equitable form of development. As we have seen in chapter two, lack of consideration of the African context has had different consequences on the future of development in Africa, as the Western norms and practices were gradually transported across the globe as the ‘acceptable’ way of behaviour while taking the traditions and practices of Africans as ‘backward and primitive’. The same problem was observed in the fieldwork in Mayaga region where some NGOs had a problem of collaborating and co-operating with both local leaders and community organisations and cooperatives.

According to the view of a key informant who is a local leader in Nyanza district, some NGOs, aid organizations and development institutions (especially international NGOs) have been described as being tools of the foreign policy aims of the Western governments from which they come and then fail to follow the policy of the countries where they operate. By making various assumptions, the key informant concluded that donor agencies risk becoming creations of the outside, embodiments of external norms and goals, and materially dependent on outside rather than local sources and realities.³⁴ In other words, failing to consider local practices and context is followed by undermining the ability of local organizations to set their own priorities and agendas and to vocalize their own vision of social change.

³⁴ Key informant interview with an agent of Nyanza district from the department of planning (March 2009)

5.6.1 Livelihood strategies

5.6.1 Coping strategies

After a shock, households rely heavily on support from friends or family from nearby regions which are not affected by shocks. These movements of people during shocks were observed in Rwanda. For instance, respondents mentioned that families often try to cope with the death of an economically active household member by borrowing more heavily from relatives and neighbours who are part of their social network.³⁵

5.6.2 Adaptive strategies

Women in Mayaga region responded to their vulnerability context by adaptive strategies. UNDP (1999) shows that adaptive strategies “are long-term changes in behaviour and practice in response to continuing stresses” (UNDP, 1999:3). For instance, agricultural cooperatives in Mayaga region responded to climate change by changing their agricultural practices and using new technologies such as irrigation (as the region is known to having become dryer over time), a technique that cooperatives’ members learnt during a study tour. This is in the framework of the Central Ministry of Agriculture that advises farmers to cultivate specific crops at specific season and in specific area. This decision was taken after nationwide research on the adaptability of crops in Rwanda. In view of this, respondents indicated that local population started rainwater harvesting or tried to diversify their livelihood activities and focus on crops less affected by natural hazards. In the situation of famine caused by “kagungu” or a sweet potato crop disease, certain family members from Mayaga region used to migrate to another place, such as Bugesera or the former Kigali-Ngari province.³⁶

Given the fact that ISAR (Institute of Agricultural Sciences in Rwanda) is located in Mayaga region, one of the adapting strategies (but which is in the same time long-term a sustainable livelihood strategy) is to stop planting drought-prone hybrid seeds in poor seasons and planted more drought-resistant local seed varieties, because ISAR has agronomists to help in

³⁵Focus group interview from KOPANTO cooperative, Ruhango district (interview held on February 24th, 2009)

³⁶ Interview with a focus group from CATM cooperative, Gisagara district (interview held on March 11th, 2009)

that. However, the extent to which cooperatives in Mayaga region can adapt usually reflects their access to and ability to use different types of assets, and in areas where there are very few assets or people lack the capacity to utilize them, vulnerability will be high. However, another alternative is for the cooperatives to diversify their activities. Most of the cooperatives visited during the fieldwork are agricultural but not sustainable.

5.6.3 Livelihoods diversification

In spite of the adaptive strategy to deal with some stresses in Mayaga region, in the interview with the key informant – a gender desk officer in Ruhango district, he informed that due to unpredictable climate change in Rwanda, people cannot rely on agriculture as the only livelihood strategy. Hence, women were advised to adopt other livelihood strategies, and explore business opportunities. In view of this, one cooperative in Rogobagoba center (Kamonyi district) weaves and sells craft as one of the many livelihood strategies that supplement subsistence farming. It is not just the cash earnings that matters to the crafter, but what those earnings mean, in terms of the potential for craft income to improve access to resources such as food, credit, healthcare, education and investments. Importantly from a livelihoods perspective, the vast majority of craft producers who have been the target of training and have sold baskets are women. Indeed, the findings in Mayaga region show that women play a key role in alleviating poverty through both their paid and unpaid work. Development initiatives that target women are widely acknowledged as a direct way to reduce poverty.

From the discussions of the respondents on question four, it is evident that the situation of vulnerability and poverty pushed women in Mayaga region to adopt diversified livelihoods strategies³⁷. Even basket weaving, which was in the past considered as a cultural activity, was adopted by women in Mayaga region and Rwanda as a whole both as an income generating activity as well as a way to maintain a strong traditional and cultural practice. Being a cultural activity in the past, some of the women were taught to weave by their mothers, others when they were at school, while others mentioned that they learnt to weave and sell baskets from their friends when they were having financial difficulties. In fact, one woman began

³⁷ Interview with a focus group from BERWAMUNYARWANDAKAZI cooperative, Kamonyi district (interview held on 31st March 31st, 2009)

selling baskets in 1997 after she divorced and was struggling to support her three children; another started weaving and selling baskets in 2000 to earn money for school fees she was having difficulties paying.

Basket weaving is only one example of how women in Mayaga region are responding to livelihood challenges. Apart from the baskets weaving, one cooperative in Gisagara district that preferred to be anonymous informed the researcher on how they use their rice produce after the harvest in a way that promotes livelihoods diversification.

From January to June 2008, that cooperative cultivated rice and harvested 4700 Kg. The members of the cooperative sold 4000 Kg (Rwf 500/Kg and got Rwf 2000,000.00 or R 28571.43); kept 100 Kg for the next planting; and every member got 50 Kg of rice to take at home. According to their rules, 2/3 of the total money (Rwf 1350000.00) is shared by members and 1/3 (Rwf 650000.00) put into the account of the cooperative in the nearest bank. If we take the example of the above cooperatives (120 members), every member got Rwf 1350000.00:120= Rwf 11250 or R160. It is from that money that most of the cooperative' members engage in informal business at their homes or as street vendors (Information revealed by a committee of anonymous cooperative in Gisagara district). Other members choose to put their money into their accounts to use it later after planning a project.

As illustrated in the three stories below, from the above dividends, businesses run at home or in local markets and money from loans, women got their own shelters and became self-reliant.

Story 1: A woman identified as KM from Gisagara district (Muganza sector) borrowed Rwf 3000 from her cooperative. From that money, she started selling tomatoes in the local market after cooperative hours. She could also sell these tomatoes to neighbours from her own home. The capital increased up to Rwf 12000 and she paid back the loan. Thereafter, she bought a small pig for Rwf 9000. The female pig grew up and gave birth to 12 piglets that she sold when they were still small, for about Rwf 72000. Another benefit was that with breeding pigs, she could get an organic fertilizer for her small gardens, which in turn, produced a lot of vegetables to feed her family and to sell to local markets. At the end of one year, she had over Rwf 140000. From that capital, she repaired the family house, and on Christmas, she bought

a suit for her husband for Rwf 10000 and bought new clothes for her children for Rwf 30000. She said that for the first time in her life, her husband asked her to organise a picnic with him.

Story 2: A woman in Ruhango district identified as NS borrowed Rwf 5000 from her cooperative. She started selling cassava meal in her area. In three months, the capital rose to Rwf 17500 and she repaid first the loan and remained with Rwf 12500. She informed me that she also used that cassava meal for feeding her two children and herself, which means that the capital could have been more than that. As she was known in the area for that business, a local restaurant asked her to supply cassava meal every Friday, the day where there is a big market in Ruhango. After 5 months of supplying the cassava meal, she reached Rwf 80000, and by the time of the visit, she was still doing that business and still a member of her cooperative. She testified that she no longer needs a loan (whether from her cooperative or any micro-finance institution) because the capital she had could help her to sustain her business. She had a plan to rent a store and look at more restaurants to supply with cassava meal, or start her own restaurant. From that business, she bought some kitchen materials that she couldn't otherwise afford. She took her children from a poor nursery school to a better nearby school.

These are only some stories, but the researcher heard many stories from different women on the way cooperatives are helping them to move out of poverty. In fact, from this asset-based approach, it is clear that the basic tenet is that asset-based community development is more likely to empower the community and therefore mobilize citizens to create positive and meaningful change from within. Hence, instead of focusing on a community's needs, deficiencies and problems, this approach “helps them become stronger and more self-reliant by discovering, mapping and mobilizing all their local assets” (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993: 35). In other words, this involves pinpointing, or mapping all of the available assets in the community, and connecting, or mobilizing them in ways that multiply their power and effectiveness.

Story 3 below shows how cooperatives' help to their members is not limited to lending them money but they attempted to help with the issue of shelter which is one of the most expensive forms of assistance that cooperatives can offer their members.

Story 3

For 6 years, an anonymous respondent woman was staying in a friend's house together with her two children, because her house was destroyed during the 1994 genocide. Three years before she joined the cooperative, she tried to start building a small house (one bedroom). She moved into it before the house was finished. For instance, there was no window when the woman with her two kids moved in. After joining a cooperative, members knew about her situation, and set up a schedule to help her together with other members with the same problem. In such a situation, members of cooperatives help their peers with labour power. From Rwf 50000 that she had saved from her dividends from her cooperatives, she bought 4 second-hand windows, 3 packets of cement and three sheets of steel. For two days, members of her cooperatives helped to fix the windows and to cement her small house after they extended the house with one extra room.

5. 7 Measuring women's empowerment

The central concern of this thesis is the livelihoods and empowerment of women working in cooperatives in Mayaga region. The point is that a livelihood is much more than a job or an income generating activity, and moves beyond basic income generation towards increased economic resiliency, political and legal, socio-cultural and psychological, and familial/interpersonal empowerment. In fact, when a woman has the skills, knowledge and confidence to find new work, as well as reserve resources and broad support networks to weather times of scarcity, she has developed a livelihood for herself. We have seen earlier in methodological framework (chapter two) that a livelihood becomes sustainable when it can minimize vulnerability – coping with and recovering from shocks and stresses, and ensure economic productivity – putting assets to work efficiently, in order to generate income and other resources. Hence, livelihoods must also advance a broader goal at the household and community level: it is important to incorporate social equity, to ensure that livelihood opportunities are equally distributed both within and between households. Table 22 acknowledges that the dimensions of empowerment are very broad in scope, and within each dimension, there is a range of sub-domains within which women may be empowered.

Table 22: Empowerment at household, community and broad arenas

Dimension	Household	Community	Broader Arenas
Economic	Women's control over income; relative contribution to family support; access to and control of family resources	Women's access to employment; ownership of assets and land; access to credit; involvement and/or representation in local trade associations; access to markets	Women's representation in high paying jobs; women CEOs; representation of women's economic interests in macroeconomic policies, state and federal budgets
Socio-Cultural	Women's freedom of movement; lack of discrimination against daughters; commitment to educating daughters	Women's visibility in and access to social spaces; access to modern transportation; participation in extra-familial groups and social networks; shift in patriarchal norms (such as son preference); symbolic representation of the female in myth and ritual	Women's literacy and access to a broad range of educational options; Positive media images of women, their roles and contributions
Familial/ Interpersonal	Participation in domestic decision-making; control over sexual relations; ability to make childbearing decisions, use contraception, access abortion; control over spouse selection and marriage timing; freedom from domestic violence	Shifts in marriage and kinship systems indicating greater value and autonomy for women (e.g., later marriages, self selection of spouses, reduction in the practice of dowry; acceptability of divorce); local campaigns against domestic violence	Regional/national trends in timing of marriage, options for divorce; political, legal, religious support for (or lack of active opposition to) such shifts; systems providing easy access to contraception, safe abortion, reproductive health services

Legal	Knowledge of legal rights; domestic support for exercising rights	Community mobilization for rights; campaigns for rights awareness; effective local enforcement of legal rights	Laws supporting women's rights, access to resources and options; Advocacy for rights and legislation; use of judicial system to redress rights violations
Political	Knowledge of political system and means of access to it; domestic support for political engagement; exercising the right to vote	Women's involvement or mobilization in the local political system/campaigns; support for specific candidates or legislation; representation in local bodies of government	Women's representation in regional and national bodies of government; strength as a voting bloc; representation of women's interests in effective lobbies and
Psychological	Self-esteem; self-efficacy; psychological well-being	Collective awareness of injustice, potential of mobilization	interest groups Women's sense of inclusion and entitlement; systemic acceptance of women's entitlement and inclusion

Source: Malhotra Anju, Boender Carol & Sidney Ruth Schuler (June 28, 2002):
<http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTGENDER/Resources/MalhotraSchulerBoender.pdf>

So, for example, the “socio-cultural” dimension covers a range of empowerment sub-domains, from marriage systems to norms regarding women’s physical mobility, to non-familial social support systems and networks available to women. Moreover, Bennett (2002) mentions that, in order to operationalise these dimensions, one should consider indicators at various levels of the society - the household and the community, as well as regional, national, and even global levels (Bennett, 2002: 237). Indeed, women can be empowered in the familial sphere without making similar gains in the political sphere. However, in terms of practical measurement, it is difficult to neatly separate out the dimensions. For example, respondents on question three and eight shows that many aspects of economic or social empowerment are considerably extended to the familial dimension, as in the case of control over domestic spending or savings, or the constraints on mobility or social activities. The

reality is that fieldwork in Mayaga region showed that in given settings, some dimensions of empowerment may be more closely interlinked than others.

5.7.1 Economic dimensions of the process of women's empowerment

We have seen in Chapter four that cooperatives play an economic role at community, national and regional level and at the household level specifically. Given the fact that the establishment of cooperative organisations aims at empowering members economically, cooperatives become a tool and a strategy of fighting poverty. By stimulating the production and the fair distribution of wealth among their members, they contribute to the improvement of community life, household conditions and welfare. They constitute a form of enterprise capable of succeeding even at the most basic level and among the poorest populations.

Apart from helping women members of cooperatives and their households, according to the information in table 19 (p.210), cooperatives offered 298 local citizens in their neighborhood part-time jobs in 2008 and 384 people in 2009 and full-time jobs to 59 people in 2008 and 82 people in 2009, and this reduced the emigration of people from the rural areas to the cities in search of jobs. This action of the cooperatives shows how members of the cooperatives can help themselves and help the society where they operate. This reduction of migration also plays an important role in reducing the spread of HIV, given the fact that, in many rural areas of Africa, research has shown that the flow of rural migrants to urban areas is one of the factors that spreads HIV in rural areas (Anarfi, 1993: 45-67).

5.7.1.1 Impact of cooperatives on the households of the cooperatives' members

Women in Mayaga region now have control over income, have a relatively higher contribution to family support, and have access to and control of family resources. Table 23 indicates not only women increased the number of meals in their households, but they also improved the quality of food. Cooperatives in Mayaga region farm vegetables and some of them are planning to farm fruits, both of which are healthy food, but unfortunately not accessible by many people in rural areas. In table 23, it can be seen that cooperatives showed improved nutrition among their household members. By improving the nutrition, the number of people suffering from malnutrition (and sicknesses attached to it) decreased, and by

extension, the expenditures of the households on health matters reduced as well. Some details can be found in table 23 below.

Table 23: Impact of cooperatives on the livelihoods of women

Year	Access to healthcare	Good nutrition	Satisfactory Education	Lack of Shelter	Participation in decision-Making	Social cases	2007	2008	2009
Before Coops	42.6%	39.7%	32.7%	35.12%	26.6%	1 meal/day	147	-	0
						2meals/day	401	-	3432
After Coops	89%	91.36%	89.05%	18.4%	57.84%	3meals/day	438	-	1154

Additionally, as found in chapters one and four, both a woman's level of education and her economic independence affect her decision-making process (see table 17, P.205)- especially when it comes to questions of contraception, age of marriage, fertility, modern sector employment and earnings. Cooperatives created jobs, and women hired members from their households for their businesses. Hence, this action is potential to increase the income in the households, as there is more than one person in the household who earn income. As highlighted during the focus group, women's access to financial resources lead to the power-sharing in the families, resulting in women to get self-esteem and confidence because they become economically independent from men. A key informant added that when women can independently decide on their spending priorities, they spend family resources for improving health, education, community development and eradication of poverty³⁸, and this profit the whole household.

As shown in the above section, cooperatives (dominantly women) provide jobs to people from the community who are not necessarily members of their cooperatives or households. However, cooperatives' members gave jobs to 465 husbands and 725 relatives. Respondents in the focus group from KAIMU cooperative, noted that among the hired people, 70% are

³⁸ Interview with a key informant, Gender Desk officer in Nyanza district (interview held on March 25th, 2009)

women.³⁹ While these are small and part-time jobs, some cooperatives can even give full-time jobs to local citizens who are not members from their cooperatives.⁴⁰ But also, beyond the households, table 24 shows that cooperatives pay taxes to local government, and in turn, these taxes are used by the government for community development.

Table 24: Some positive impacts of cooperatives on the households

Nbr = Number P.time = part-time Rwf = Rwanda Franc (1 R = 60 Rwf)

Job creation / Nbr employed by coops		Reduced social cases within coops members		Reduced migration flows within coops members		Improved number of meals per day within coops members			Paid taxes by coops
P.time	Full time	Before	After	Before	After	1 meal	2 meals	3 meals	Per year
298 (2008)	59 (2008)	3579 (2007)	179 (2008)	763 (2007)	67 (2008)	147 Before	4001 Before	438 Before	Rwf 568947 (2008)
384 (2009)	82 (2009)		11 (2009)		0 March 2009	0 Now	3432 Now	1154 Now	Rwf 476341 March 09)

Additionally, during the interviews, respondents revealed that the improvement in the health of households was measured by the accessibility of the community health insurance (“mituelle de santé”), comparing the number that accessed it before and after joining cooperatives (see table 24). In table 24, one can see that 89% of cooperatives’ members now have access to basic health insurance, compared to 42.6% of those having health insurance in the early stages of joining cooperatives. Changes in diet and nutrition were the other measurement of household health, and were measured by noted improvements in diet (variation and inclusion of fresh vegetables and fruit) of the households of the cooperatives’ members. Looking at table 24, one can see in that 438 cooperatives’ members (7.84%) taking 3 meals per day in 2008 moved to 1154 (20.65%) people in 2009.

³⁹ Interview with a focus group from KAIMU cooperative, Gisagara district (Interview held on March 10th March, 2009)

⁴⁰ Visit to Gitwe cooperatives which were not part of the sample of twelve cooperatives.

Looking at table 25, it can be seen that before women's involvement in cooperatives, 291 cases of broken families were stated, and after two years in cooperatives, in 237 families, the good relation between husbands and wives were restored, thanks to the improvement in women's financial independence. While discussing the root of gender-based violence in the previous sections, as well as in both chapters four and five, we saw that its main root cause is the financial dependence of women on men. This was highlighted during the focus group. Given the fact that many women involved in cooperatives are the bread-winner in their families, respondents in the focus group showed that the practice of *kwirukana* or sending back home (to her family – a practice which is applied to women) and very common in Rwanda, is no longer used among the cooperatives' members. The thing is, a husband cannot chase a wife from whom he is surviving.⁴¹

A key informant said the same on this point, highlighting that in her experience with cooperatives, when a women is no longer financially dependent on a husband, they take decisions in a consultative manner. This is illustrated in the table 25:

Table 25: Impact of cooperatives on the households

Cooperatives/ Members	Health and nutrition - coops and family members		Education		Shelter		Improved relationships	
	Access to special medicines	Recovered from sickness	Back to school	Improved education	Homeless that found shelter	Improved shelters	Bad relationship before	Improved relations
5586	385	543	295	734	54	178	291	237

⁴¹ Interview with a focus group from DUTERIMBERE cooperative, Nyanza district (interview held on March 21st, 2009)

Table 24(p.238) indicates how women's economic power also enhances the wealth and well-being of a country. In fact, we have seen that between 2008 and 2009, cooperatives in Mayaga region (dominantly women) paid Rwf 1,045,288.00 (R 14 932) to Rwanda Revenue Authority in terms of taxes from their businesses. In addition, women who control their own income tend to have fewer children, and this contributes to the economy of Rwanda, given the fact that women can pay for the education of their children, thus reducing the government's expenses in paying for the education of poor children.

The achievement of women as discussed in the previous sections, is a result of a combination of different assets available to them - whether social, physical, natural, human or financial. Taking the example of the financial capital, in addition to what was discussed on p.206; women got other strategies to reinforce their assets, through an asset-based approach, thus, mobilizing their own assets to empower themselves, their households and the community as a whole. From the examples below, one can see that outsiders came to empower what they achieved themselves.

- From an “inside out” approach of development, women working in Mayaga region contribute Rwf 50 (1R = 65 Rwf) or Rwf 100 per month, multiply seeds and sell them to other cooperatives (i.e. many cooperatives from Burundi come to purchase cassava seeds from Rwandan cooperatives especially in Mayaga region), and sell baskets in the case of the baskets weavers. Some cooperatives have also extended their production by purchasing land and fertilizers. These assets mobilization help them to rely on their effort, instead of depending on the external aid.
- However, women in Mayaga region also got material and technical support from the local government and non-governmental organizations. For instance, Care International helps cooperatives in Mayaga region through training their members, advocacy and funding the performing cooperatives to the sum of 50000 – 200.000 Rwf. The local government helps cooperatives with technical assistance, providing them land to use temporarily, and selected seeds (for some cooperatives in their first days of starting activities), as well as building factories for processing some agricultural products like cassava, maize and rice. The local government also provides offices and temporary store rooms for some cooperatives.

5.7.2 Psychological dimension of the process of women's empowerment

At a personal level, psychological empowerment is about self-esteem, self-efficacy and psychological well-being. At community level, psychological empowerment is about collective awareness of injustice and the potential for mobilization; and at the broader level, it is about women's sense of inclusion and entitlement, and the systemic acceptance of women's entitlement and inclusion (Schwindt-Bayer and Mishler, 2005: 407-428).

Marginalized women often have low self-esteem and lack assertiveness. They may be exhausted from living in constant crisis. All of these factors make it difficult for them to participate productively in economic activity. The fieldwork in Mayaga region showed that in cooperatives, during the business development planning and start-up phases, women are faced with a multitude of decisions. Fellow members of cooperatives could provide powerful support for each other, encouraging and augmenting individual self-esteem. Growing a business and earning money are also both powerful builders of self-esteem. Participatory decision-making, assertiveness training, and training in communication skills are additional examples of activities that help build confidence and assertiveness. As women begin to experience personal change, women's organizations and the civil society can reinforce new behaviours and help them to recognize their personal growth over time.

However, women entering cooperatives often have dependency patterns that hinder their progress towards sustainable livelihoods. They may have relied on a partner or on the social assistance system for a long period of time, and consequently have limited ability to be self-directed. There is also the danger that women may become dependent on some funders for decision-making and direction; so it is important that they be encouraged to make their own decisions and build independence. Self-employment is the quintessential self-directed activity – in many respects the process of business development forces women to become independent in order for their enterprise to succeed.

The act of expressing an interest in cooperatives demonstrates a woman's motivation to change. Yet motivation usually waxes and wanes during a program depending on the progress of the business and the challenges faced. In the beginning, women found that it took time and practical experience for them to determine whether they are suited to work in the cooperatives. They had to sort through a range of personal and circumstantial factors that

affected their enthusiasm for this new livelihood strategy they have pursued. As a result they could take months to move through the transitional stage, from coping to adaptive strategies. Once this was accomplished, they could begin to focus on the business with enthusiasm and commitment.

5.7.3 Empowering women through education

Look at table 21(p.227), one can see that at the household level, we have seen that women involved in cooperatives in Mayaga region in the beginning were bound both by culture and lack of economic independence. We have also seen that throughout the history of Rwanda, daughters have been discriminated against generally and in education specifically. However, from the stories seen in the previous pages, as women become financially independent and able to contribute to the daily life of the household, men respect them and conflicts are limited. At community level, the findings show how women became visible and gained access to social spaces by their participation in different committees of the structures of the society and of their cooperatives. Respondents show on question one that this openness of women contributed a lot to a shift away from patriarchal norms, where a woman is “Nyampinga”, committed to staying at home to care for her husband and for visitors. In a broad sense, women’s literacy and access to a set of educational alternatives, positive media images of women and their roles and contributions at different levels helped in shifting away from stereotyping women as second class citizens in their societies.

Rwandan girls and women have historically been marginalized from the educational system and from participation in public life more broadly. Girls’ schools were introduced a full 40 years after boys’ schools. Initially, girls’ education focused on developing skills which reinforced their socialized roles, such as secretarial skills, home economics and general hygiene, while boys were prepared to become co-partners in administration activities and other development fields. Young men also enjoyed favoured access to education at higher levels and in different fields, including administration, science and technology. Though policies have been revised to promote equal access to education at all levels, people’s attitudes have evolved more slowly, and socialized roles and stereotypes continue to prioritize boys’ education and access to employment. However, with an enabling policy environment in place, Rwanda has made strong progress in improving access to education at all levels, and improving gender parity at the primary and secondary levels, consistent with

ESSP (East African Secondary Schools Programme) policy goals. With this progress, Rwanda has moved from a position near the bottom of regional education performers, to become one of the regional leaders in achieving universal primary education and demonstrating continued improvement in secondary enrolment. For more details, see table 27 & 28.

Table 26: Education in Eastern African Community (EAC)

East African countries 2000-2005	Primary school net attendance Ratio (2000-2005)		Secondary school gross enrollment rates(2000-2005)	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Kenya	79	79	50	46
Tanzania	71	75	6	5
Uganda	87	87	18	14
Rwanda	75	75	15	14

Source: World Bank Rwanda FTI Assessment, 2006

Table 27: Gender equality at both the primary and secondary levels

Prim. and Sec. gross enrollment Ratio (Females enrolled per 100 males)	Primary (Gender Enrolment Ratio/GER – 2000-2005)	Secondary (Gender Enrolment Ratio/GER – 2000-2005)
Kenya	95	92
Tanzania	96	83
Uganda	99	78
Rwanda	102	93
SSA	86 (2001/2002)	79 (2001/2002)

Source: World Bank Rwanda FTI Assessment, 2006

In the above achievement, the role played by cooperatives and the community at large is not doubtful. As the previous discussions showed, a cooperative can be characterised as primarily an economic organization formed and managed by members who endeavour to help one another to satisfy their economic and social needs, but the outcome of their labour profits their children and relatives and the society at large at all levels: public health, education, shelter and peace building.

In Table 28, one can see that 295 children (125 boys and 170 girls) had abandoned school due to the poverty of their parents before they joined cooperatives. Now, they had all come back to school. Moreover, 734 children (347 boys and 387 girls) improved their education, whether by changing from former schools to better ones, or paying teachers to coach their children in some specific subjects during holidays.

Table 28: Achievements by cooperatives at the household level

Cooperatives/ Members	Health and nutrition - coops and family members		Education		Shelter		Improved relationships	
	Access to special medicines	Recovered from sickness	Back to school	Improved education	Homeless that found shelter	Improved shelters	Bad relationship before	Improved relations
5586	385	543	295	734	54	178	291	237

Because research has established that basic education of girls and women improves key development outcomes, such as reducing fertility or child mortality and increasing worker productivity, it is often assumed that education enhances women's own well-being and gives them greater autonomy in shaping their lives, and better opportunities for participating in the community and labor market. A recent review of research undertaken by the International Center for Research on Women (ICRW) shows that basic education is not sufficient to achieve these empowering outcomes for women. Only secondary or higher levels of schooling lead to improved options and outcomes for women and create the enabling conditions for them to be empowered (Malhotra and Mather, 1997: 599-629).

However, while there is no doubt about the relationship between education and women's empowerment, it is true that even in an enabling policy environment of Rwanda generally and Mayaga region specifically, a number of social and institutional barriers continue to prevent girls and young women from attending schools and universities and from performing equally to their male classmates. The prioritisation of science and technology within the educational and development policies of the country may act to further exclude female

students unless additional actions are taken to promote women's participation in these fields. Addressing gender equality in the education system, with a focus on improving girls' educational performance and outcomes, is crucial to meeting Rwanda's development goals and to protecting women's human rights within the country.

On the side of cooperatives, women members claimed to be too old to go back to school, but believe they can acquire other skills for the improvement of their cooperatives. Thus, their concern is not about institutions of higher learning to pursue science and technology courses, but rather to learn how to manage their small projects, basic skills in agriculture (i.e. the use of fertilizers) and the basics of accountancy. We showed earlier that women in Mayaga region benefit from some training (i.e. unity and reconciliation, public hygiene, HIV/AIDS prevention etc), but some relevant training directly connected to their work in cooperatives is missing. There are some programmes of training run by the government, but due to limited financial means, they target only the representative committees of the cooperatives. Nevertheless, even if they were to train all the cooperatives' members, it might prove difficult to adopt a methodology that will help illiterate members within the cooperatives. Surprisingly, even illiterate members can manage their small projects, and can use calculators even though they cannot write.

5.7.4 Cooperatives as tools for peace-building and for unity and reconciliation

During the fieldwork, respondents stated that cooperatives in Mayaga region have become a good tool for local conflict resolution, and have even become positive actors in public and international relations with neighboring countries, resulting in preventing conflicts between countries. Associations in Muganza district, part of the fieldwork region which is neighbouring Burundi, were exchanging goods with their Burundi counterparts involved in cooperatives during the time when there was a political crisis between Rwanda and Burundi over border disputes and other security matters. This was the same for Cyangugu and Gisenyi's cooperatives who were exchanging goods with the cities of Goma and Bukavu in the neighbouring Democratic Republic of Congo, while both countries were fighting.

More specifically, two stories below show how cooperatives have been a good tool for unity and reconciliation among cooperatives members and by extension, a good example for the community where they stay.

Story 1 : A woman identified as UCR found herself together with a man identified as RS who chased her husband from his home when he was looking for refuge because he was been hunted by the “interahamwe” killers. After being chased, the killers found him and he was killed. In 1995, after UCR knew the story behind the death of her husband, she took RS to court as an accomplice in the death of her husband. RS was sentenced to 5 years in jail and afterwards was released. When a cooperative started in their area, UCR and RS met by coincidence in the same cooperative. In the beginning, UCR didn't even want to see RS although he tried to show her solidarity and love. RS always tried to talk to UCR. One day, when cooperative members were helping UCR to repair her house through “umuganda”, RS showed great determination and commitment in the initiative. Another day, when it was the birthday of UCR, RS gave her a birthday card. She didn't throw the card away but kept it. When World Vision in Rwanda organized training, UCR and RS found themselves in the same group. During the workshop, UCR was courageous to talk openly to RS about their bad past. Since that time, they chose peace and reconciliation. They appreciated the role played by their cooperative in Ruhango district and the role played by individual cooperatives members who knew their story.

Story 2: Another woman in Nyanza district identified as MO has her husband in jail for his involvement in the 1994 Tutsi genocide. MO is together in a cooperative with another woman identified as NT who was involved in indicting the husband of MO. According to MO, NT's testimony in her husband's verdict was biased. The first days in the cooperative were hard for them. However, due to similar cases found in their cooperative, members decided to create an informal counseling committee. That committee invited MO and NT and listened to their stories. It was found that MO had the wrong information, and that NT had not given any wrong information about the husband of MO. However, the problem was that before joining cooperatives, neither could take the initiative to meet and tackle their problems. Now they are friends and help each other.

We can learn a lot from the above stories. In post-1994 Rwanda, no other initiative was better than cooperatives in putting people together, especially people with conflicts with the

community. The two above cases did not only help the individuals concerned, but also helped other cooperative members. Most importantly, such stories are collected by some non-governmental and governmental organizations, who compile the stories and use them while training the community in unity and reconciliation. In view of this, it is true to say that cooperatives are good tools for unity and reconciliation in Rwanda. In an interview with the coordinator of the Department of Planning in Nyanza district, he states from his experience in the district that women are better at forgiveness, reconciliation and post-conflict peace-building than their male counterparts.

These perceptions are based predominantly on two notions. Rwandans believe that most of the consequences of war and violence fall on women and that they are therefore highly motivated to prevent conflict. In fact, although this culture and tradition were violated during 1994 genocide, in the Rwandan culture, it was unacceptable to kill women and children during warfare. Rather, they were taken as slaves, and sometimes deported (Uvin, 1998). In spite of being portrayed as the primary victims of violence and conflict, women have always played a pivotal role in conflict resolution. That is why, even today, Rwandans believe that when there are more newborn girls than boys, it means that there will be no war in the near future.

Reconciliation is a complex term and there is little agreement on its definition. It is both a goal – something to achieve - and a process, a means to achieve this goal. The basic definition of reconciliation is “a process through which a society moves from a divided past to a shared future” (Arjan de Haan, 1998:11). It takes time. There is no quick fix to reconciliation. Its pace cannot be a problem but a solution. There must be a specific process to achieve reconciliation in a specific context. There is no such thing as a perfect reconciliation model or method. Basic principles that should underpin the design of every reconciliation process include: it begins early, it is receptive to change and challenge, it sticks to the commitment and deals with hard issues, when they will get harder with time; it must be given sufficient time, it cannot be rushed (Arjan de Haan, 1998: 75).

In the profile of the study participants, we have seen that there are women genocide survivors among them, and women whose husbands perpetrated genocide, and in some cases who killed the husbands of other members. Cooperatives are also constituted in some cases by some men and women released from prisons working together with those who took them to

court. In post-1994 Rwanda, it was a hard task to put these people together. In fact, respondents on question three show that, in the beginning the communication between cooperatives' members was difficult. Nevertheless, given the fact that they all have the same challenge of poverty, putting their efforts together to fight it was not an option, but a compelling necessity. As time went on, and by working closely in cooperative activities, cooperatives' members ended up talking to each other, and sharing challenges. They chose peace, reconciliation and good cohabitation. This is confirmed by some stories from participants in this research.

The peacemaking of Rwandan women is exemplified through names given to women/girls such as *Nyampinga – Gahuzamiryango* or “social mediator”. Women traditionally intervened in preventing their sons or husbands from going to unjustifiable wars by laying a symbolic road block, a loin cloth (*Umweko*) at the entrance of the homestead (Gallimore, 1988: 3). In the history of Rwanda, women have sometimes played a critical role in restoring peace. Moreover, as the first agents of socialisation, women are natural teachers for peace education to their children. In playing their roles as parents, service providers and teachers, they are ideal for instilling into their children such values as respect for others; the peaceful solution of conflicts and problems; sharing; partnerships; tolerance; a sense of justice; equity; and equality of the sexes, all of which are qualities of sustainable peace. However, in the specific case of Rwanda, it is painful that some women were involved in genocide, even the sisters from different religious communities. In the same way, in post-1994 Rwanda as in earlier periods, some groups of women who sell drugs were found in Kigali, and were working with gangs in Kigali or were identified as prostitutes.

In view of the above, the government of Rwanda involved women in the process of peace and reconciliation in the post-1994 genocide because the government is convinced that sustainable and durable peace requires the participation of women and girls as well as the integration of gender perspectives in all reconstruction processes. According to a report from the Ministry of Gender and Family Promotion (MIGEPROF) (2006), there are two strong reasons why women in Rwanda should be involved in the peace process (MIGEPROF, 2005:57):

- Compared to men, the 1994 genocide had more negative effects on women who are genocide survivors, widows, heads of households and caretakers of orphans. This

position of women in the post- 1994 society cannot be ignored in the process of peace and reconciliation.

- Their long experience in their roles as peacemakers, as women in the family, as mothers, wives and sisters where they prefer problem solving through open communication, honest discussions of differences, and dialogue among all concerned parties. They are used to resolving disputes through the best means of ensuring that at least some of the concerns of all conflicting parties are met – a win/win situation – and a family model which seeks fairness and reconciliation rather than victory and retribution.

Furthermore, as bearers of life, women can offer a special perspective and experience which will help to overcome prevailing life-destroying methods of dealing with human problems and conflicts. Since military conflicts and diplomacy, which have traditionally been exclusively orchestrated by men, have failed to be a reliable system to safeguard peace, the inclusion of women in all stages of the peace process becomes imperative. Hence, as we have seen above, the Government of Rwanda is strongly committed to the promotion of gender equality in all aspects of national development including the critical area of peace and reconciliation. This assessment of women's contribution to peace and reconciliation is timely as Rwanda looks forward to the next decade after the genocide.

Another confirmation of the effectiveness of women in peace process is from Rosenthal (2001) who argues that women's leadership and conflict resolution styles often embody democratic ideals in that women have tended to work in a less hierarchical, more participatory and more collaborative way than male colleagues (Rosenthal, 2001: 21-46: http://dx.doi.org/10.1300/J014v21n02_02). A tangible example from Rwanda is that women are also more likely to work across party lines, even in highly partisan environments. In fact, since assuming 56 percent of the seats in the Rwandan parliament in 2008, women have been responsible for forming the first cross-party caucus to work on controversial issues such as land rights and food security. They have also formed the only tripartite partnership among civil society and executive and legislative bodies to coordinate responsive legislation and ensure basic services are delivered. In the situation of cooperatives in Mayaga region, as women are together at least three days per week, they have a good opportunity to exchange views on new policies and in several times, have influenced the policies to be formulated by the central government on land issues specifically and rural development generally.

According to Anderson (2000), involving women in the peace process is a way of promoting human security and the rights of women. This is a work that UN tries to do in post- conflicts like in Rwanda and other countries around the world. The United Nations aims to ensure that the human rights of women and girls are protected during armed conflicts, and that women and gender issues are integrated into conflict-resolution, peace-building, and reconstruction (Anderson, 2000: 396). However, in spite of this commitment from the United Nations, we can still see the sidelining of both women actors and gender issues in many contemporary conflicts, peace-keeping initiatives, and reconstruction efforts in many Africa countries. Anderson (2000) indicates that in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, women have experienced human rights violations on a massive scale. In these and other cases, women are neither adequately represented at decision-making levels nor involved in peace negotiations and agreements; women's grassroots organizations and peace initiatives are marginalized or ignored. Far from implementing a gender perspective into disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration of former combatants, women face the threat of gender-based violence. What is more, the interests and needs of women and girls are hardly taken into account in post-conflict reconstruction (Anderson, 2000: *ibid.*).

From the views of respondents on question three, it is clear that cooperatives managed to lessen social tensions and helped cooperatives' members to find common ground on which they can cooperate and collaborate, because their desires and aspirations were similar regardless of differences and conflicts in the past. In doing so, cooperatives' members reinforced individual and family ties and hence built peace in their communities. The main causal factor of family instability in the post-1994 period was economically and socially related – on the one hand caused by the consequences of the 1994 genocide, and on the other hand caused whether by conflicts over resources left behind by the victims of the genocide and war, or mismanagement of the family resources. As seen earlier in this chapter, through cooperatives respondents revealed that they were taught how to avoid the pitfalls of money mismanagement.

In view of the above, one can say the case study of Mayaga region illustrates just how effective women can be in reconciliation and peacemaking processes and even in conflict or violence prevention. According to the stories seen earlier, cooperative organisations in Mayaga region have played a role in peace-building in post-1994 Rwanda, especially in the

restoration of relationships between conflicting parties - genocide survivors and former genocide perpetrators, as well as their respective family members. The respondents highlighted that a cooperative is the only place where these kinds of groups could meet for mutual help. Indeed, the most challenging problem in the Rwandan society in the post-1994 period was how to restore interpersonal relationships after violent conflicts or mass atrocities - one of the pressing challenges to be taken up in post-conflict societies not only in Rwanda, but in the world as a whole. During the fieldwork, respondents themselves attested that their cooperatives started in fear, suspicion, mistrust, hatred and misperception between cooperatives' members, as relationships that had been friendly, open and trusting in the past were no longer there.

From the success of the rural cooperatives in Mayaga region, it is clear that, despite the growing body of literature challenging the top-down approach to peace-building specifically and to development generally, there is a need for more research regarding the effectiveness of the bottom-up approach.

5.7.5 Familial/interpersonal empowerment

At household level, we have seen earlier (see table 17, p. 204) that their involvement in cooperatives helped women to participate in domestic decision-making, and by deduction, to gain greater control over sexual relations. Respondents on questions three and five, supported by the views of a key informant, indicate how women in Mayaga region attained the ability to make childbearing decisions, use contraception, have power over spouse selection and marriage timing and freedom from domestic violence. From the view of the respondents, the improvement of the financial situation of women contributed a lot to this shift. It was highlighted that men dictate women what to do, when women financially depend on men⁴². When women become economically independent as some women in Mayaga are, they can decide on decisions affecting their life, with or without the agreement of their husbands. Nevertheless, respondents highlighted that, in order to avoid a backlash from men, women mostly opt to adopt a dialogical approach. It is in this context that cooperatives include men. Although women are dominant in number, no number of men is limited from participation in cooperatives. That inclusiveness is an acknowledgment of the other person,

⁴² Interview with a key informant, an anonymous woman who represents women's councils in Ruhango district (interview held on March 17th, 2009).

an event experienced between two persons, mutual respect for both views and a willingness to listen to the views of the other.

At community level, familial and interpersonal empowerment is about the shifts in marriage and kinship systems indicating greater value and autonomy for women, such as later marriages, self- selection of spouses, reduction in the practice of dowry and the acceptability of divorce. We have seen in the profile of the study participants that 5% of women from the cooperatives targeted in this study are divorced, and 65% are either unmarried mothers or widowers – all of them classified as single mothers. Despite their painful past (for those who lost their husbands during 1994 genocide), these single mothers are proud to say that they can choose to be married/re-married or not, because they can survive and raise their children without any contribution from men. Indeed, respondents on question one testified that lack of financial freedom for women is at the root of their abuse by their husbands and the society as a whole.

In the broader arena, familial and interpersonal empowerment is about regional/national trends in the timing of marriage, options for divorce, and systems providing easy access to contraception and reproductive health services.

Recent research has shown that improving women's decision-making power relative to men's within households leads to improvements in a variety of well-being outcomes for children and these outcomes are extended into the broad arena. Looking at table 25, when the influence of women's power is particularly strong, these outcomes include improvements in children's nutritional status and in the quality of feeding and health care practices. We have seen in chapter two and four that strengthening women's power not only increases the well-being of children as a group, but also serves as a force to reduce long-standing discrimination that ignores women capabilities in different relevant areas of life as well as human and economic development in general. In other words, we can also say that an increase in women's decision-making power in relation to men's, if significant, would be a useful force for discouraging discrimination against girl children.

5.7.6 Political and legal empowerment

Table 29: Women's political and legal empowerment

Dimension	Household	Community	Broad arenas
Political	Knowledge of political system and means of access to it; domestic support for political engagement; exercising the right to vote	Women's involvement or mobilization in the local political system/campaigns; support for specific candidates or legislation; representation in local bodies of government	Women's representation in regional and national bodies of government; strength as a voting bloc; representation of women's interests in effective lobbies and interest groups
Legal	Knowledge of legal rights; domestic support for exercising rights	Community mobilization for rights; campaigns for rights awareness; effective local enforcement of legal rights	Laws supporting women's rights, access to resources and options; Advocacy for rights and legislation; use of judicial system to redress rights violations

Source: Malhotra Anju, Boender Carol & Sidney Ruth Schuler (June 28, 2002):
<http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTGENDER/Resources/MalhotraSchulerBoender.pdf>

One questions five and eight, the respondents informed that after the cooperatives' activities, they meet for literacy and other learning. Sometimes they invite the local government authorities and NGOs to help them in the process. Among the topics they deal with are knowledge of the political system in Rwanda and means of access to it, domestic support for political engagement, and how women can exercise to the maximum their right to vote. At community level, respondents showed how during the 2008 elections, their members were involved and mobilized a campaign of supporting their fellow women who were candidates for the parliament. They showed their support for specific candidates or legislation and for representation in local government bodies. They were proud because this is something that they were not allowed before 1994. At the broader level, after they demonstrated their power

in the elections and developed a voting bloc in rural areas of Mayaga region, they obtained strong representation in regional and national bodies of government, and strengthened the representation of their interests through effective lobbies and interest groups.

In fact, Rwandese women in different positions of leadership played critical roles in mobilizing fellow women to live together and to find common solutions to their own problems and those of their country. Examples are the Unity Club and the Forum of Rwandan Women Parliamentarians. The Government of Rwanda demonstrated its will to give women the trust and responsibility of rebuilding the nation by appointing them to all positions of leadership and responsibility in society. For example, women are serving in the executive, legislative and judicial arms of the government. Women worked together to forge solidarity and unity among themselves as the first step towards mobilization of other women; for example, the Unity Club, as a forum of top women leaders and spouses of top leaders in government, aimed at creating unity among themselves; and then being able to preach the message of unity and reconciliation among the communities. They conducted concrete activities such as helping orphans, fostering them and supporting victims of famine and flood, while always championing unity as their goal.

On the other hand, with regard to legal empowerment, it was shown earlier how during local training and mobilization, women in Mayaga region attained knowledge of their legal rights and domestic support for exercising rights. At community level, some organizations such as AVEGA and *Pro-Femmes Twese Hamwe* (or All Together in Solidarity with Women) mobilized and trained women on the topic of women's and children's rights, and some campaigns for rights awareness were organized. This was backed by effective local enforcement of legal rights. At the broader level, as seen earlier, there are laws supporting women's rights, access to resources and options, advocacy for rights and legislation and use of judicial system to redress rights violations. Most importantly, women are involved in all the processes of legal empowerment through women's councils from the grassroots to the national level.

National women's councils provided platforms to enable women to gain visibility and be able to contribute to national debate and influence policy development and democratic processes of the country. For example, in mobilizing women to participate in the *Gacaca* courts (see chapter four) in decentralization and poverty reduction processes, in fighting the HIV/AIDS

pandemic, and dealing with the consequences of the 1994 genocide. Research shows that women can influence peace and reconciliation if they are empowered to participate and taking major decisions at community, local, national and international levels. The government has put in place a legal framework facilitating national women's councils to provide a forum through which women exchange views on national issues and the overall development of the country. Through these councils, women have been able to make input into national policies and programmes. These include Vision 2020, PRSP, the decentralization policy, the national Land Bill, the land policy, the succession law, the traditional participatory system of justice - *Gacaca* courts as seen earlier in chapter four - and many other areas of critical importance to peace-building including the new constitution (MINICOFIN, 2007: 42).

These councils of women were backed by the forum of Rwandese women leaders' caucus, as seen in chapter four, which started as a caucus that brings women from different backgrounds together, and they were able to lobby together and influence enacting of laws that protect and promote the rights of women; for example the inheritance laws, the law on the rights of the child, and the rights of women at the place of work. Besides, the caucus of women parliamentarians was able to advocate for women's rights and gender equality, and also mobilized grassroots women to contribute to the making of the constitution, so that the issue of gender equality takes centre stage. At the same time they monitor the budget and ensure that the budget addresses the needs of women and men.

5.8 Key negative livelihood outcomes identified during the fieldwork

5.8.1 Child labour

While the successes and achievements of women working in Mayaga region need to be acknowledged, we also need to acknowledge some negative outcomes that were observed during the fieldwork. As seen earlier, some women involved their children in their business after school hours. Instead of concentrating on their school homework, children sell or help their mother to sell foods products in what they call "ku cyimeza", the 'all table shop', because they set their products on a table, in the open-air or in front of their houses. On questions seven and eight, respondents highlighted how this attitude of some cooperatives' members has affected the performance of these children at school in different ways

Table 30: Extra activities after cooperatives

People engaged in business run by women				
Total number	Coops members	Their children	Their relatives	Their husbands
5418	2847	1381	725	465
100%	52.5%	25.5%	13.4%	8.6%

The data that appears both in the above table 30 shows the overall situation of people involved in the small income-generating projects run by women after the time allocated to cooperatives work. As seen earlier in this chapter, the capital that women use in these small businesses is from the money they earn from cooperatives' activities through street and home-based small businesses like selling vegetables and other foods.

Street vending is not only the practice of women working in cooperatives; street vendors are very common in Mayaga region and Rwanda as a whole. The problem is also common – involving children in the business and disturbing their schooling. However, apart from the negative side of engaging children in the business, “street vendors constitute a significant share of total employment in the informal sector and street vending units constitute a significant share of total enterprises in the informal sector” (Carr, Chen, and Tate, 2000: 123-142). Women account for more than 50 percent and up to 90 percent of informal employment in trade, except in those countries (such as Tunisia and India) where social norms restrict women's mobility outside the home. Consider the case of Benin: a 1992 survey of 10 major cities in that country found that street vendors constitute 80 percent of all economic units, women constitute 75 percent of all street vendors, and women street vendors constitute 26 percent of urban informal labor force and 24 percent of the total urban labor force, but like in Mayaga region, the problem is the same – involving children in street vending (World Bank, 2000)

The international and national organisations (governmental and non-governmental) working in the field of education in Rwanda have always fought for the elimination of child labour, and for guaranteeing good quality free education for all children, as being two sides of the same coin. One cannot be achieved without the other. These too have to be addressed in the

broader context of socio-economic justice or poverty. It was the endeavour of these organisations to demolish the age-old myth that poverty causes and perpetuates child labour and illiteracy. The fact is the other way round. Asiimwe (2010) highlights that illiteracy, child labour and poverty form a classic triangular 'chicken & egg' relation, and "therefore coherence in policy, coordination amongst institutions and convergence in programs is necessary for attaining sustainable development and justice" (Asiimwe, Bosco R.: 2010)

It would be an over simplification, albeit romantic and even radical, to propagate that building schools alone can solve such complex problems of poverty and child labour, including slavery and trafficking. In the same manner "those who only believe in economic growth and enforcement of legislation, are incomplete in their approach" (MINECOFIN, 2007). Hence, it requires an urgent multi-pronged approach and determined efforts on part of all, including governments, ministries, other implementing agencies, political parties and civil society to end the scourge of child labour. In fact, the three key processes affecting the future of the world, in particular our children, are elimination of child labour, universal education, and poverty alleviation.

This problem of child labour is not particular for one country, it is almost everywhere. As a matter of fact, children in similar situations have been described by Nabeta (2009) in her research in Tanzania. Nabeta researched children working in a stone quarry. For their survival and the survival of their families, children in Kunduchi (Tanzania) were involved in quarrying and the main job was to crack bigger stones into smaller pieces of gravel. The children work for six days a week, for about 10 hours a day during the school holidays, and for about 4-5 hours during the school term (Nabeta, 2009: 24). While they were doing this work, other children were doing subsidiary work like selling refreshments and snacks with their parents, or tending to their younger siblings at the nearby house. All of the eight children interviewed by Nabeta had the same explanation for their participation in quarrying: lack of school fees or school requirements and household poverty (Nabeta, *ibid.* p.25).

In the case of Rwanda, a US\$ 5million project is run by Rwanda Education Alternatives for Children (REACH) to reduce cases of exploitative child labour in the districts of Nyarugenge, Nyaruguru, Gicumbi, Nyamasheke, Nyagatare, Rubavu , Kayonza and the whole Mayaga region has been launched. In 2002 about 352,550 children were estimated to be working on smallholder coffee, tea, sugar and rice farms (mostly in Bugesera, Mayaga region and

Nyamagabe district) and in the street vending business. A big number were also working in stone quarries and as herders (*New Times, 2010*). The four-year project that is funded by the US Department of Labour (USADOL) through Winrock International (WI), Netherlands Development Organization (SNV) and Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE), is seeking to withdraw 83,000 children from exploitive labour in the seven districts and put them in schools. The project will also help establish 42 model farm schools, provide youth with agriculture vocational education and improved employment opportunities (*New Times, ibid.*).

However, while appreciating such initiatives of the government of Rwanda, the researcher still stands on the view that empowering cooperatives or engaging the community in the process should be a better alternative to tackle the challenges of street children and child labour. The common mistake that many development planners make is the adoption of top-down and anti-dialogical systems of development towards the beneficiaries of development, ie the community. Most of the time, they think they know what the community wants and undermine the assets the community has to solve its own problems. In Freire's language (Freire, 2000: 74), the dialogical action is needed is problem-solving. Dialogue is a give and take of ideas, a sharing and not an imposition.

5.8.2 The case of “mayibobo” or street children

“Mayibobo” is a Rwandese name given to street children. The issue of “Mayibobo” was also found among cooperatives' members. These children leave their homes for different reasons: lack of care, vagabondage, family disintegration or family poverty. They can be divided into two categories: children who have never attended school due to different factors (usually the poverty and ignorance of their parents) and those dropping out of school. As see, earlier, women working in cooperatives in Mayaga region managed to take back to school 294 children who were “Mayibobo”. In addition, cooperatives' members improved education for 734 children, whether by paying for extra-hours, or paying for better schools. However, respondents registered 19 children among their members who chose to become “Mayibobo” for one reason or another, but mostly due to lack of care, as cooperatives make their parents/guardians very busy. The 19 children left their homes; they work for food in urban areas and come back home only at Christmas or for other special family events. The

difference between the two kinds of children is that “Mayibobo” live on the street and do not communicate with their parents or relatives on a regular basis. They live on their own, surviving through their own (child) labour and sleeping on the street. From all the above challenges, the counseling committees of the cooperatives are planning to organise talks for families which have such cases, and then having an open debate on the issue with all the members of the cooperatives, so they may prevent such incidents.

However, there is a challenge that cannot be ignored; some members of the cooperatives are literate and other, illiterate. Hence, if some members of the cooperatives did not go to school, it is not sure that they will motivate their children to read or to do school work at home, and of course, they do not have the capacity to help their children with their schoolwork. On the other side, literate cooperatives’ members may be able to help their children with school work, but it is not assured that they will take time to talk to their children, for both academic and moral support. In view of this, the cases of “mayibobo” children concerns all categories of women members in cooperatives. The common denominator, whether in Mayaga region of Rwanda or Kunduchi in Tanzania discussed in the previous section, is that all of these children need to work for money to survive, sometimes through doing degrading work or work inappropriate for children – quarrying for children in Kunduchi and “karani ngufu” for children in Mayaga region (“karani ngufu” are people carrying very heavy items).

In view of the above, while clearly educational incentives may provide good grounds for withdrawal of children from the labour market and from the situation of “Mayibobo”, or the physical well-being of children accounted for (by the provision of basic health and nutrition) – cooperatives’ members have the obligation to learn more about the evolution of their children and behaviors attached to that so they may know how to help them psychologically. In fact, it is not enough to help children academically or materially, this needs to be accompanied by a psycho-moral support. On the side of the government, a policy addressing child labor must be formulated to complement the effort of the parents. On question eight, respondents showed how they were concerned with the issue of their children’s education and the issue of broken relationships between cooperatives members and their children. Although the strategy was not finalized by the time of the fieldwork, cooperatives members had started

making a strategic plan to eradicate all the problems related to disturbance of the education of children of their members.⁴³

However, even though 19 children from 5586 total cooperatives members, we cannot only focus on this positive aspect, but we can also look some positive aspects of cooperatives members who took back 293 children to school, due to money earned from cooperatives. Furthermore, cooperatives members improved the education of 734 children, whether by paying extra-school hours, taking children to better schools and purchasing good school materials.

5.9 Negative outcomes of micro-finance institutions

The year 2005 was designated by the UN as the "international year of micro-credit." To appreciate how specific the economy is in most African countries, one must understand and analyze how the informal sector is operating and the way micro-financiers are mostly working within the informal sector which is dominated by women. We have seen earlier the positive side of micro-financiers and how micro-credit is a key issue for the development of Mayaga region and by deduction of Rwanda as a whole, and the effort of micro-financiers to helping in alleviating poverty. However questions do need to be asked. For example, are the existing methods of the micro finance institutions (MFIs) cost effective? Is it possible to increase their efficiency? It is these questions which are the root of the Paris Conference, held on November 30th, 2005.

From the case study of Mayaga region, we have seen earlier in table 18 (p.222) how out of 12, 7 cooperatives contracted loans from micro-financiers and local banks. One can observe that 42.8% of the cooperatives pay regularly and 42.8% pay irregularly, which means that half the coops are financially viable and half are struggling to pay. One cooperative was taken to court by a micro-financier due to repeated irregularities in the payment. In the post-1994 Rwanda, as donors and practitioners became increasingly concerned about the quality of their interventions, interest has grown in developing clear and precise measurement methods for micro-finances. During the Paris Conference, some questions were raised: What should be the best approach for targeting the poor? How can a MFI simultaneously focus on the very poor and face the challenge of sustainability and outreach? To what extent can financial and non-financial services help improve the living conditions of the poor? (VATÉ: 2004). In fact,

⁴³ Focus group interview from DUFATANYE cooperative, Nyanza district (interview held on March 21, 2009)

such questions were raised based on some negatives outcomes of micro-creditors where some micro-creditors sell the property of borrowers who fail to repay back their loans. However, the impact of selling the assets of the borrowers do not fall on him/her as individual, but also affect all people depending on the borrower, who is also the breadwinner. Although the researcher did not find such a case within his case study, some respondents revealed their fellow cooperative members may face the same situation of having to go to court, if they fail to pay by the end of 2010. If that happens, it will not be something new, because the assets of a fellow cooperative (brick-makers) in Nyanza district, Gacu sector were seized by a micro-financier.

The stakeholders in the industry of micro-credits themselves argue that their clients are increasingly finding it difficult to repay their loans, not due to lack of training for the borrowers, but due to a general slowdown in economic activities in Rwanda as a result of external shocks of the global financial crisis. For instance, INKINGI micro-credit highlights that "economic conditions have changed from the time when they gave out loans - clients are finding it very difficult to pay back because generally there is no money in the economy" (MINECOFIN, 2007), and one of the MFI representatives in the Paris Conference told the workshop that "banks should adjust their interest rates to reflect the changes in the market" (Camilleri Jean-Luc, January 2005). One of the micro-finance organisations visited in Mayaga region informed the researcher that commercial banks are charging interest rates between 17 and 19 percent, while BRD (Rwandan Development Bank) charges 6 percent annually. For the micro-finance organisations, the interest rate varies between 15 and 20 percent. Respondents revealed that the interest rates for micro-finance organisations are determined by the market, thus if they have more demand from the field, they decrease the rate; when the demand is low, they increase the rate to avoid loss as most of the micro-financiers also borrow money from banks.

UNDP suggests that offering small, affordable loans to people not served by traditional banks has been called "a weapon against poverty and hunger" (Paris Conference, 2005). The UNDP delegation highlighted that for a long time, donors and practitioners have used micro-finance activities to alleviate poverty by creating income and jobs. This was based on an assumption that by integrating the poor into the economic circuit, micro-finance was automatically promoting development. In recent years, donors are becoming more concerned about the quality of their interventions and, with the experience they have gained on the

limits and possible negative effects of micro-finance, they see the need for more impact measurement tools to be set up (Paris Conference, 2005).

While answering to question eight, respondents mentioned another issue, that micro-finance institutions' practices may somehow increase economic and social exclusion, given the fact that the very poorest people who did not join cooperatives or who do not have collateral cannot access loans. In the case of cooperatives, as long as a cooperative is registered, if it does not have collateral, the Department of Cooperatives in the local government can play the role of facilitator between micro-finance institutions and borrowers to access the loan. Another challenge with micro-finance organizations which was stated in the fieldwork, is that when there is a high flow of loans in rural areas, there is a saturation of the traditional market, resulting in squeezed profits.

In fact, in Gisagara district, the researcher visited a local market after one focus group interview, and observed that many people from the same place sell the same products bought using money borrowed either from their coops or from micro-financiers). As many people sell same products in a same place, the profit becomes small because sometimes they put a small price for some products (i.e. vegetables) so they may be sold before they get rotten. From such unsuccessful experiences, some respondents revealed that their cooperatives' members now prefer to invest their in the farming of vegetables in small gardens around their homes. One respondent witnessed how she earned more money from gardening than from the 'table shop' business practiced by almost every household in the villages of Mayaga region. A part of the produce from gardening (vegetables) is used at home, and another part is sold to local restaurants which prefer fresh vegetables from the farm to vegetables from the shops. Other respondents prefer to invest in breeding small livestock like goats, pigs or chickens, rather than going to compete in selling products in local markets. Interestingly, these small farmers do not have a problem of a market, as workers from butcheries in nearby cities always need to buy the livestock for their butcheries. The problem of micro-financiers in this context is that they only provide money but are not specialized enough to follow up and advise the borrowers. However, this behavior of the micro-financiers may not mean lack of specialized personnel; it may also be a way of avoiding expenses attached to the follow up, sometimes supposed to be done in different areas far away from their offices.

5.10 Conclusion

This chapter discussed how rural women working in cooperatives in Mayaga region have achieved more sustainable livelihoods as a result of their own labour, and cooperation with the supporting policy reforms by the Rwandan government. We found that the entitlement gain by women has enabled them to engage in decision-making structures from the grassroots to the national levels. We have found that these entitlement benefits must be seen within the context of the political reforms and change in development paradigms towards livelihood approaches that began to have impact on development in rural areas in post-1994 Rwanda. In post-1994 Rwanda, the political motivation for involving women in agricultural development interventions has strengthened and started to gain institutional endorsement. However, while women have benefited from entitlements that developed their livelihoods, these benefits have not translated directly into eradication of gender-based violence, especially in rural areas of Mayaga where some men still think they can abuse women in the name of culture.

Moreover, we found that due to women's involvement in cooperatives in Mayaga region, significant changes in their own lives, in their households and in the community as a whole, must be noted. In fact, respondents witnessed how cooperatives have been fruitful, and have generated income to them and enabled them to improve their health and shelter. We have seen that through cooperatives, women have managed to put food on the table and have become financially independent. This chapter highlighted that slowly but surely, assets are deemed to belong to the whole family and not solely to the husband. Some other achievements in women's empowerment were noted in this chapter: efforts have been made to educate girls as well as boys, women are free to leave the home and to choose what livelihood strategy to adopt, and they are acknowledged for their contributions to their family, to the community, and to national development.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 General conclusion

We have seen that cooperatives encouraged women to be involved in organisational and business affairs (see chapter three). In many cooperatives in Mayaga region, women are holding administrative positions and doing functional activities (whether in cooperatives or in community structures) and that they fulfil their responsibilities successfully. Furthermore, we have seen that grassroots women took full responsibility to face the challenges of a post-conflict period and combined their hard work to ensure the survival of their families. Moreover, given the fact that the post-1994 Rwanda was a post-genocide period, peace-building and reconciliation were one of the key issues in Rwanda reconstruction.

This research showed how cooperatives in Mayaga region have helped the local community to move forward towards lasting peace and reconciliation. Their actions have yielded positive outcomes in terms of social capital and towards a strong political movement towards national reconciliation, and towards gender equality and women's empowerment.

The research also indicated the role of norms and customs in determining relationships in the household and the unequal roles, responsibilities and assets in the household, leading to different challenges to men's and women's responses and behaviour. However, the findings from this research show that women's empowerment through participation in cooperatives has resulted in significant changes in patriarchal power relations. Thus, they have challenged the patriarchal understandings and stereotypes of women. In other words, the key finding of this research is that women's empowerment through cooperatives can lead to changes in behaviour – illustrated by the dramatic drop in violence against women in the case study. Additionally, the findings show that economic independence and real empowerment can change not only culture, but gender relations, and other power relations, in any society. The corollary of this is that patriarchal systems in Mayaga region (or in any given society), if not overcome, can hamper not only women's rights, but also retard societal development and poverty reduction.

These changes at grassroots level among the poorest rural women took place within the context of national policies, institutions and processes. The goal of all these policies on women's empowerment in Rwanda is bringing about the advancement, development and empowerment of women. These policies are broadly disseminated so as to support active and effective participation of women in achieving their goals.

We have seen that policies, institutions and processes have had positive outcomes on women's livelihoods in Mayaga region. Indeed, policies, institutions and processes in post-1994 Rwanda have defined women's livelihood options and motivated them to participate in decision-making structures. They have shaped women's livelihoods in Mayaga region from their households to their activities in the cooperatives. This has determined not only their access to the various types of capital (natural, physical, human, social and financial), but also the substitutability of capitals.

This research highlighted how the progression of women and the success of equality between women and men are both a human rights issue and a condition for social justice. Additionally, the entitlements and capabilities framework of Amartya Sen (1990) provided a useful approach to understanding the poverty of women in Mayaga region and Rwanda as a whole, as it emphasised the whole range of means, not just income, available to achieve human capabilities. Viewed in this way, this research found that poverty and deprivation for women in Mayaga region and Rwanda as a whole are a result of entitlement failure, rather than insufficiency per se. The research made it clear that beyond income and basic services, women (but also the society as a whole) are poor and tend to remain so if they are not empowered to participate in making the decisions that determine their lives. From the perspective of Sen's understanding of development, this research found that the concept of development does not only stand upon the quantitative measurement of household income, but also depends upon qualitative factors like fulfillment of some of the fundamental human needs for a livelihood, to give each person the help of vital infrastructure, food, health, education and safe drinking water.

This study indicated how women have assets (as men) that they can use for their own empowerment, and the upbuilding of the society. SLF helped to analyse these assets, supplemented by ABCD which suggests that people can move from the needs-based understanding of development to asset-based community development.

We have found in this research how cooperatives are good mechanisms for pooling poor people's insufficient resources with a view to offering to them the advantages of economies of scale. The fieldwork data showed that in Rwanda, participation and inclusion of cooperatives are central to the national strategy for poverty reduction. Cooperatives are an ideal instrument for such a strategy and Rwanda is now drawing on the possible strength of a vibrant cooperative movement. In this research, we further found that cooperatives are a key organizational form of community development and a tool for fighting social exclusion and promoting peace and reconciliation, for example, through local development initiatives and mobilization of savings, among other initiatives. Thus, cooperatives took women from the isolation of home into cooperative social work.

Looking at the role played by women in improving their livelihoods and reducing their vulnerability context through cooperatives, it is clear that as development comes from within, likewise empowerment comes from within. In other words, women in Mayaga region are agents of their own development and empowerment, and must take the forefront in that process.

6.2 Recommendations

In view of the challenges and achievements of women working in cooperatives in Mayaga region, some issues need to be tackled by the concerned authorities and cooperative organisations. Hence, this research concludes by outlining some strategic recommendations for those working with cooperatives, not only in Mayaga region or Rwanda, but also for other countries worldwide that use the system of cooperatives:

6.2.1 For cooperatives' members and/or the local government

- From the experience uncovered in the fieldwork in connection with the lack of a market for some agricultural produce farmed by cooperatives (eg cassava, sweet potatoes) the research recommends that women take the lead to create conditions to market their produce through outlets established together with fellow agricultural cooperatives. Some agricultural cooperatives in the Northern Province of Rwanda managed to set apart a space in their shopping areas exclusively for cooperatives and even for the individual farmers from their cooperatives to sell their products.

Cooperatives in Mayaga should extend their study tour and visit these cooperatives to see how they managed to achieve this. In this process, the assistance of the local government is needed.

- Although some cooperatives in Mayaga region and the local government's Department of Cooperatives managed to record some statistics of their activities, trustworthy quantitative information on cooperatives (number of members, assets, challenges met, evaluation reports among others) is extremely hard to obtain. Therefore, regular sample surveys on the ground would make a world of difference for following up cooperatives to facilitate decision-makers in policy formulation.
- During the individual interviews with some cooperative department officers in the districts and local NGOs, their views were that cooperatives should serve as vehicles for carrying out other programmes or making federations and unions. This shouldn't be a good choice, given the fact that cooperatives in Mayaga region are still at the first stage of dealing with livelihoods matters. In fact, cooperatives are still in the process of maintaining and structuring themselves as a self-conscious organisations led by cooperative values and principles. Before confederations or unions, they should cautiously consider the extent to which they are performing their primary role – that is, to reinforce the self-reliance of groups of people who may not have access to fundamental goods and services. A Rwandan proverb “iyihuse ibyara ibihumye” which translates “a boat has to stay afloat before it can take passengers”.

6.2.2 For the Central government, the international community and NGOs

- Cooperatives in Mayaga region have been seen to be an effective means to spur development and to alleviate poverty. They have achieved social as well as economic goals. From these successes, the Rwanda government and national and international NGOs should recognize the need to strengthen the cooperative organisation and make it a model for rural development to be popularised not only in the region, but in the country as a whole. In other words, there is a need for replication of positive experiences to help countries which are still starting with the system of cooperatives.

- Looking at the role played by culture in gender discrimination, both the Rwandan government and NGOs working in the field of gender and development or working as civil society need to organise extensive training programs for women (but also involving men to avoid backlash) on gender and cultural awareness. However, to change this traditional point of reference without causing social dislocation especially to the family structure is essential to any development program and empowerment process.
- The girl child of today is the woman of tomorrow. The skills, ideas and energy of the girl child are imperative for full achievement of the goals of equality, development and peace. For the girl child to develop her full potential, the government of Rwanda needs to continue improving the policy of women's empowerment so that a girl may be nurtured in an enabling environment, where her intellectual, material and spiritual needs for survival, safety and development are met and her equal rights protected. If women are to be equal partners with men, in each phase of life and development, now is the time to acknowledge the human dignity and value of the girl child and to guarantee the full satisfaction of her human rights and vital freedoms.
- Half the world's population is under the age of 25 and most of the world's youth - more than 85 per cent - live in developing countries and more than 50% are women. In Rwanda, women are 54% of the population and 74% of the visited cooperatives' members in Mayaga region. Policymakers, whether in Rwanda or elsewhere, and the international community at large, must acknowledge the implications of these demographic factors. Special measures must be taken to make sure that young women have the life skills necessary for effective and active participation in all levels of cultural, social, economic and political leadership. It will be challenging for the international community to demonstrate a new dedication to the future - a dedication to stimulating a new generation of women and men to work together for a more just society. This new generation of leaders must understand and advance a world in which every child is free from injustice, repression and inequality and free to develop her/his own talents, the community and the country at large. Therefore, the principle of equality of women and men must be central to the socialisation process.

- Poverty elimination cannot have as a foundation a narrow understanding that relies exclusively on “rising incomes” or macroeconomic growth. Although achieving a sustainable and positive growth rate is recommended for poverty alleviation, it is not sufficient since the gains of growth do not trickle down automatically to all households or to all the members of the household. Households must not be understood as harmonious units. Gender differences in the experience and incidence of poverty must be dealt with in a contextualised way. Hence, closing gender gaps in education, eradicating illiteracy, public provision of health services, water, etc. all help for the overall poverty eradication, but they are particularly challenging for eradicating women’s poverty by enhancing women’s capabilities. The case study of Mayaga region demonstrated that cooperatives are a good vessel to achieve this.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Consent form and questionnaire

(i) Consent form

You are invited to be in a research study of gender and development: the process of women's empowerment in post-1994 in Rwanda. You were selected as possible participants because this study focuses on women's cooperatives in Mayaga region where your cooperatives are doing their activities. We ask that you read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing or disagreeing to be in the study.

This study is being conducted by Celestin Hategekimana, School of Business and Economic Sciences, Department of Development Studies, Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University, Port Elizabeth/ South Africa. The purpose of this study is to look at the extent to which women are empowered in Rwanda, and at possible implications of that empowerment on the livelihood of women in Mayaga region and in Rwanda as a whole.

This study will not use video or audio taping; rather it will use written notes, and to a very limited extent will take pictures after consulting the participants. This talk will take one hour. Moreover, participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with me as a researcher and as a fellow Rwandan citizen. Even if you decide to participate, you are free to not answer a question as long as you state that it is sensitive to you, furthermore, you can withdraw at any stage without penalisation.

The records of this study will be kept privately. In any sort of report we might publish, we will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely and only researcher will have access to the records. If necessary to put pictures in the study, the researcher will first ask the concerned persons.

Dear participant, thank you for your participation in this study. Should at any time during the study: an emergency arise as a result of the research, or you require any further information with regard to the study, don't hesitate to call / see me at any time at the following address:

- From Monday to Friday : the workplace of the visited cooperatives (please contact any member of the committee of your cooperative, or call me on cell : 0788513288
- From Saturday to Sunday: Kimironko, Avenue Icyuzuzo, Kigali. Cell phone: 0788513288, Email:hatcele06@yahoo.com

Ihave read the above information, have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Signature of the researcher _____

Date: _____

NB. This form was translated into the local language, Kinyarwanda.

(ii) The questionnaire

Q1: People talk about gender; do you know anything about it? What is your experience of gender relations in Mayaga region and in Rwanda as a whole?

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.....
.....

Q2: Some statements say that women are poorer than men; do you agree with people saying that? If yes, what do you think is the root cause, and what are the consequences?

.....
.....
.....

Q3: I see that you decided to work in cooperatives. Why did you decide to do so? Can you tell me some of the benefits of working in cooperatives?.....

.....
.....

Q4: To what extent did the local and central governments empower you in your journey to sustainable livelihood? Are you happy with that? Can you explain?.....

.....
.....

Q5: In post- 1994 Rwanda, there have been different political, economic and social reforms (i.e. land reform, new policy on women abuse, new policy on women's empowerment...). Does this make any impact on your gender relations and on your livelihood in Mayaga region?.....

.....
.....

Q6: From the above reforms, women must participate at least at 30% in all the structures of the Rwandan society (2003 constitutional reform) and I suppose women within your community are involved in the structures of the local government and the central government? How did this help women in your region?.....

.....
.....

Q7: What could be your recommendation to the local and central government towards the current process of women's empowerment?.....

.....
.....

Q8: According to what we have been discussing in relation to gender relations and women's empowerment in Mayaga region and Rwanda as a whole, do you have anything else to inform the researcher and the audience?.....

.....
.....

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