



# RTB Working Paper

## Gender Norms and Farming Households in Rural Rwanda

A GENNOVATE CASE-STUDY FOR THE NYAMIRAMA  
SECTOR IN KAYONZA DISTRICT

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N O V E M B E R 2 0 1 7



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# Summary

This report presents data and results from a GENNOVATE case-study conducted in the Nyamirama sector in Kayonza district in Rwanda that focusses on gender norms and agency in relation to agricultural innovation.

Historically in Rwandan society, women are considered inferior to men and live under their authority. After the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi's, women were not only demographically over-represented (with 70% of the population consisting of women), the new government also took important steps to strengthen the legal and political position of women and lift them up to equal positions vis-à-vis men. This has considerably influenced local gender relations in Nyamirama where this case-study was conducted; gender-based violence for instance is reported to have decreased considerably.

In the Nyamirama sector in Eastern Rwanda the majority of the population is Christian and most people live in households consisting of husband, wife and an average of six children. Approximately one-fifth of households consists of a woman alone with children and are *de facto* 'female-headed'. Households with a husband are always considered to be headed by the man. The community is growing in terms of population, welfare and economic prosperity; most children now go to school, poverty is declining and more people have jobs outside their own farms. Agriculture is still the most important occupation with approximately three quarters of the population involved. Average farm holding size is estimated at 0.6 hectares with sizes ranging from 0.06 to 3 Ha. It is rare for women to own land alone and for those that do, land holding size is small.

Both men and women usually engage in agricultural production but many crops or agricultural practices are gendered. Also the level of access to and control over resources, especially to land, is very different for men and women. Especially for women, access and control tends to change following marital status. In general, women enjoy increased agency to participate in household decision-making, to manage income and to inherit and own land. The latter is supported by national law and policies. It is expected from women however to always discuss with her husband and not act alone or without his consent. The same accounts for women's mobility, although expanding it is still tainted by normative ideas which present women's place in first instance within the family compound. This strongly contrasts with men who can go anywhere, provided they have the resources.

It is common for girls to start living with men at 17-18 years of age and the majority of girls have their first child before 18 years of age. Women are often unable to use contraception without approval of their spouse. Domestic violence is still prevalent but there has been a decrease in occurrence compared with a decade ago. Causes for the decline in gender-based violence (GBV) are a combination of government policy (criminalizing domestic violence) and awareness campaigns and trainings.

In both men's and women's perception the level of power and freedom for the own sex has increased compared to ten years ago and women report greater (positive) change than men. With regards to agricultural innovation women identify innovations linked to maize such as sowing in line and use of fertilizer and new varieties as most important to them. Maize is important for women because it serves an important role as food crop to shorten 'the hunger gap' the period in the year in which food is scarce. In addition women can sell small quantities of maize both raw and processed to supplement

their own income. The two most important innovations for men are linked to banana. Men also list a number of innovations around soil erosion control and agro-forestry. The two innovations most consistently listed for men and for women by both sexes are 'kitchen garden production' for women and something on banana for men. Both these innovations relate to traditional roles of women and men as responsible for meals and sauces and responsible for monetary income respectively.

Overall wealth in the community has increased and extreme poverty has considerably decreased in the perceptions of both women and men. National stability and government programs are mentioned as drivers of change. On a household level, people 'move out of poverty' when they engage in 'modern farming'. Harmony in the household and joint decision-making of spouses are both identified as pre-requisites or favorable conditions for developing the household. Land ownership is main indicator for wealth ranking in this community; this directly reflects the (large) importance of farming as a livelihood in Nyamirama.

# Introduction

This report synthesizes data from a case-study conducted in Nyamirama sector in Kayonza district in the eastern Province of Rwanda and focusses on gender norms and agency in relation to agricultural innovation. The case-study followed the GENNOVATE methodology (Petesh et al., forthcoming;) and data was collected in December 2014.

## 1.1 BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

Rwanda is a small land-locked country in the middle of Africa, in the so-called Great Lakes region. Rwanda borders Tanzania, Burundi, DR Congo and Uganda and is a member of the political union of East-Africa. The landscape of Rwanda is characterized by gentle hills, and the climate is sub-tropical with two annual rain seasons. Rwanda lies at an average altitude of 1500 meters with peaks up to 2500 meters.

Rwanda is home to three different ethnic groups namely the Twa (1%), Tutsi (16%) and Hutu (83%). The Twa descend from forest-dwelling pygmy people, whom are considered to be the first inhabitants of the Great Lakes region. The Hutu and Tutsi are both Bantu groups and opinions vary about whether they should be considered as distinct ethnic groups at all. All three groups speak a common language – Kinyarwanda (Adekunle, 2007). Ethnic/political conflict between Tutsi and Hutu has marked contemporary history of Rwanda and the larger Great Lakes region to an enormous extent (Chretien, 2003).

In order to understand the current political environment and context in which gender relations have changed or not, it is essential to have some insights in the events that took place since the beginning of colonisation.

### CONFLICT IN RWANDA; A SHORT HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

Hutu and Tutsi settled in Rwanda between 700 BC and 1500 AD and formed kingdoms based on clan lineages from the 1500s onwards. Leading up to colonialism in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century one Tutsi-ruled kingdom gained dominance in the area (Adekunle, 2007). When Germany first explored the country, they used this existing administration to exercise influence. During World War I, Belgium took control of Rwanda and started a more colonial rule in which radical changes in the economic and educational and health systems were made. The Belgians ruled through the Tutsi elite and emphasized the differences between Hutu and Tutsi whilst promoting Tutsi supremacy (Chretiens, 2003; van Reybrouck 2010).

Tensions between the Hutu majority and Tutsi ruling minority grew and were exacerbated as differences between groups were emphasized by government. Between 1959, when Hutu emancipist activists first attacked Tutsi leaders, and 1961, Rwanda was the scene of violent clashes up to the moment that the Hutu majority party won the first democratic elections and Rwanda became independent soon after. Hundred thousands of Tutsi fled to neighbouring countries, mainly Uganda, following this regime change (Wikipedia; van Reybrouck 2010).



In the 1990s the Tutsi-refugee army Front Patriotique Rwandais (FPR) launched a civil war and forced the Hutu majority government into negotiations about power-sharing. This led to a rise of extremist anti-Tutsi sentiments among some conservative Hutu in government and in 1994 the government-led and staged 'Genocide against the Tutsi' took place (Wikipedia). Over a three-month period an estimated half to one million Tutsi and moderate Hutu were killed, and a quarter to half a million women were raped. Specially formed militia of HIV-infected Hutu men raped thousands of Tutsi women to spread HIV. An estimated 20,000 babies were born as a result of rape and HIV-infection of raped women was as high as 67% (Wikipedia; BBC; Survivors Fund, 2018).

The FPR, led by current president Kagame, took control of the country in July 1994 and ended the genocide. An estimated two million Hutu fled the country, mainly to refugee camps over the border in Zaire (now DRC) and Tanzania where they reformed and staged frequent attacks on Rwanda. The new Kagame-led government supported by Uganda, launched two wars against the Democratic Republic of Congo (DR Congo), now known as the Congo wars I and II, between 1997 and 2003 to protect Rwanda from these Hutu rebellion groups operating from DR Congo. The first Congo war removed long-time Congolese president Mobutu from power and installed president Kabila I. The second Congo war caused millions of deaths in the eastern provinces of DR Congo and up to today, rebel groups operate in Eastern-DRC and cause havoc (Wikipedia, van Reybrouck, 2010).

After the genocide the new government was faced with the tough task of dealing with resettling millions of refugees and returnees from the region, trying the offenders linked to the genocide, re-building infrastructure and the economic system, and managing the trauma resulting from the genocide. Against the odds, the government has been able to provide stability, peace and economic growth over the past two decades. Human rights organisations are critical of the lack of press freedom and suppression of political opposition and Rwanda's role in the on-going violent and unstable situation in eastern DRC and Burundi.

## 'GENDER' NATION-WIDE CONTEXT

After the genocide, women formed up to 70% of the population because of the targeted killing of men during the genocide, and were at the forefront of rebuilding the country. Policies promoting gender equality were consolidated in law and up to today Rwanda is one of the few countries in the world where women occupy a majority of parliament seats. Although women have enjoyed greater freedom and increased access to political and economic spheres since the genocide, traditional gender norms continue to hold women back in especially rural areas (women for women, 2015). In its gender policy the government of Rwanda states that: *"Rwandan society is characterised by a patriarchal social structure that underlies the unequal social power relations between men and women, boys and girls. This has translated into men's dominance and women's subordination. Gender inequalities have not been seen as unjust, but as respected social normality"* (Ministry of Gender and Family Promotion, 2010). A gender analysis from the Rwanda Institute of Policy Analysis and Research (IPAR) and OXFAM states that women are traditionally considered as 'naturally inferior' (Abbott et al., 2015).

The Rwandan government has put into place a number of policies and strategies that specifically aim at improving the legal and economic status for women and promoting gender equality. The Agriculture gender strategy (Alinda and Abbott 2012) for instance aims at: 1) institutionalizing gender equality in the agriculture sector; 2) Developing capacities in the agriculture sector to enable gender sensitive programming; 3) Enhancing gender responsiveness in delivery of agricultural services; 4) Promoting equal participation in decision making processes; 5) Developing and coordinating partnerships and collaborative mechanisms amongst government institutions, CSOs, private sector and development

partners, and 6) integrating appropriate actions to respond to practical and strategic gender needs in the agriculture sector. Challenges to realizing these strategic objectives as identified by Rwanda's institute for policy analysis and research include: lack of understanding on gender equity issues on all administrative levels and low levels of women included in local level decision-making (Alinda and Abbott 2012).

With regards to ownership and access to productive resources the government has adapted land tenure and inheritance laws to ensure that women co-own land together with their husband when married and have the same rights as men on inheriting land and other assets. These new policies conflict with customary law however and it is uncertain whether women really benefit from these reforms or the changes are merely cosmetic.

In line with traditional ideas that men need to control their wives and daughters, gender-based violence (GBV) is rampant in Rwanda. In 2014, 20.7% of women aged between 15-49 years had been victim of GBV in the past 12 months (World Bank). Although formal law criminalizes GBV it is difficult for women to get legal justice. One of the reasons is the custom to have local mediators intervene in cases of domestic violence, who tend to apply customary law over formal laws.

## 1.2 SELECTION AND SAMPLING-FRAME CASE-STUDY

The CGIAR Research Program on integrated systems for the Humidtropics (CRP-humidtropics) has funded this study to shed light on the relation between gender norms, agency and innovation in agriculture and national resource management. Humidtropics had specific interest in Kayonza district because an Innovation Platform (IP) was located here. The platform had the mandate to experiment with various technological and institutional innovations that aimed to improve rural livelihoods and household food security. The IP was focussing on three field sites in Nyamirama sector, which was therefore selected for this case-study.

### SAMPLING FRAME

All GENNOVATE case-studies are situated in a sampling frame which indicates the level of economic dynamism and the gap in gender equality between men and women. The Kayonza case-study was characterized as 'high' in economic dynamism and 'high' with regards to inequality between women and men (see table 1). These values were set especially in reference to other case-studies conducted in the region (Burundi, eastern DRC and Uganda) and do not necessarily reflect the level of economic dynamism or gender inequality vis-à-vis other districts in Rwanda. More specifically it could be said that Nyamirama does not have a particularly dynamic economic sector but there are various positive developments, and livelihoods of the population are reported to be improving. Also in reference to other case-studies in Burundi and eastern-DRC, the absence of conflict and violence of itself is already an achievement.

Gender inequality is characterized as high because, especially in rural areas, traditional norms and values about appropriate behaviour of men and women dictate to a large extent their conduct and generally consider men as superior to women. But in comparison to some of its neighbours, Rwanda has made big steps in improving the legal position of women and women's participation in (especially national) decision-making processes.

*Table 1. sampling frame GENNOVATE*

<b>Kayonza, Rwanda</b>	High	Low
------------------------	------	-----

Economic dynamism	x	
Gender inequality	x	

## FOCAL INNOVATION

In line with the nature of this particular CRP – Humidtropics – no specific crop or technology was identified beforehand for in-depth exploration. Rather respondents discussed innovations / technologies which were most important to them personally or as a group. In the focus group discussions, the top 2 of most important innovations listed by the group, were further explored.

## 1.3 PROFILE OF THE LARGER RESEARCH AREA

Nyamirama is a community [sector] in Kayonza district consisting of four administrative cells, in the eastern province of Rwanda, approximately 1.5 hours' drive away from Rwanda's capital Kigali. Kayonza district borders Tanzania and is for a large part within the perimeter of Akagera National Park.

Rwanda is one of the most densely populated countries in Africa but in Kayonza district it is the lowest amongst all Rwanda's districts with 178 inhabitants per km<sup>2</sup> which is mainly because of the presence of National Park Akagera in the district. Women outnumber men with 110 to 100, and the majority of the population (55%) is under 19 years old. The average household consists of 4.7 persons (NISR 2011).

Forty-three per cent of the population in Kayonza district is considered as 'poor', with 19% considered as 'extremely poor'. The large majority of the population (72%) has access to an improved water source which takes an average of 16 minutes to reach, and 13% walk more than 30 minutes to their nearest improved source. Only 7% of Kayonza's population is connected to the power grid. Half of the households in Kayonza own at least one phone and 65% of households own a radio (NISR 2011).

Farming is the main occupation in the district with 71% of the population above 16 years identifying as 'independent farmer' and 6% as 'wage farmer'. Household duties take on average of 20 hours a week with women reporting an average of 28 hours versus 10 hours reported by men on average. The mean size of land cultivated per household in Kayonza district is 0.82 ha. Only 22% of households in Kayonza cultivates less than 0.3 ha (versus 46% nation-wide), which makes Kayonza the district with the lowest number of cultivators categorized as 'very small' in the whole of Rwanda. Eighty-seven per cent of women identify as small-scale farmers (wage + independent) versus only 67% of men. The mean share of total crop production which is sold, is 27% for Kayonza district, which is one of the highest nation-wide. 64% of households raise some kind of livestock (NISR 2011).

Two-thirds of Kayonza's population is literate. 2.2% of the population between 0 and 20 years is orphan and 12% have one parent deceased. One in four households is headed by a women and an additional 5% of households is classified as 'de-facto female-headed household' which means the husband is ordinarily absent. Households where an adult man is present are always classified as male-headed even as 'de-facto' this might not be the case (NISR 2011).

The government of Rwanda has rolled out several rural land policies under which the "land tenure regularization" program. One in two households in the district have been exposed to this program (NISR 2011) which aims at registering land titles of all landowners in the country and securing the land-rights of women. As a result of this policy, 92% of all land titles now have the name of a woman included (NISR 2011).

## BASIC INFORMATION FROM THE COMMUNITY PROFILE

Two women and two men considered as 'community leaders' participated in a group interview described as 'community profile'. The information below is based on the data derived from these key-informants.

In Nyamirama sector the population is estimated to be around 30,000, an estimated increase of 12% since 2005. Christianity is the pre-dominant religion in the area. No information about ethnicity was solicited from key-informants due to the sensitivity of the topic and active government policy to discourage use of ethnic information. Informally we were informed however that the community consists primarily of Hutu. On average households consist of 6 people which is considerably higher than the district's average of 4.7. One-fifth of households is headed by a female. These households are frowned upon, especially when "*frequented by men*". Female-headed households often struggle to educate their children and to meet basic household needs.

The community is more prosperous than 10 years back. The majority of households sell agricultural goods on the local market. Market offers are changing and so are diets and ideas on nutrition. The market is not well connected to other markets. Few people sell on distant markets and traders only come occasionally. Agriculture is the main occupation for the majority of inhabitants and banana is described as the most important crop. Both men and women are involved in banana crop management. Other important crops are maize and tomato for men, and beans and 'vegetables' for women. Men and women both grow sorghum, cassava and sweet potatoes. Average farm land size is estimated at 0.6 Ha and sizes range from 0.06 to 3 Ha. The land women own is similar in quality as that of men's but often smaller in size (0.06 Ha). About 20% of women rent out their land to other people. Women collectively cultivate land in a communal marshland which is managed by a women's cooperative. Apart from working on their own farm, many people work as casual labour on other people's farms, and 40% of women do this regularly. They earn the same wages as men for this work.

More women are engaged in non-agricultural jobs nowadays. Whereas ten years ago almost no women had non-ag jobs, nowadays up to 35% do. Women are responsible for all reproductive work in the household with men only contributing to the fetching of water and firewood collection.

Almost all boys and girls are enrolled in primary school and about three-thirds also continue to secondary school with no differences recorded between boys and girls. Both primary and secondary schools are present in the sector.

Cohesion in the community has improved since 10 years back when there were a lot of tensions. This was caused by the grassroots judiciary court actions following the 1994 genocide and reapportioning of land.

## 2. GENDER NORMS

### 2.1 WOMEN AND MEN'S ROLES IN THE DOMESTIC SPHERE

The large majority of households in Kayonza is made up of a man and a woman and their children. Polygamy does occur but is rare. The key-informants from the community estimated that approximately 20 households in the sector of Nyamirama (total population 30,000 people) were polygamous. Not all couples are married though; co-habitation seems to be quite common.

In one of the focus groups it is discussed what constitutes a 'good husband' and a 'good wife', the answers are indicative of existing norms about appropriate behaviour for men and women within the domestic sphere. For women a 'good husband' in relation to his family is a man who is legally married to his wife (in contrast to co-habitation), doesn't have extra-marital sexual relations, loves his wife and children and consults with his wife. He is also hard-working and takes care of his family. Men echo this picture to some extent; they also disapprove of infidelity and say a good husband gets along well with his wife and he occupies himself with his family for instance by assuring the children go to school and the family has access to healthcare. A good husband is also self-sacrificing. Vis-à-vis 'other people' a good husband is someone who gives others advice and that gets along well with his neighbours. Men even say that he is a role-model for others. On a more personal level a good husband respects himself and prays to god.

Some of these characteristics apply to perceptions of a 'good wife' as well. A good wife is notably also faithful to her husband and legally married. But the list for women is longer and includes more 'do not's' than for men. A good wife doesn't get drunk for instance and she doesn't gossip nor 'spill the secrets of the family'. Both men and women also say she doesn't spill the wealth of the family. There is also more emphasis on the responsibility of wives to maintain good relationships with the rest of the family and specifically the in-laws and the community at large. Men say she doesn't get angry and obeys her husband. The latter is in line with the overall picture that arises of the husband as 'Head of the Household'; able and expected to make all major decisions regarding the household. The idea of the man as head and the woman as subordinate is strongly associated with religion. In a female FGD the position of a woman vis-à-vis her husband is described as follows: *"from the word of God, the wife came from the man, she has to subordinate to the husband no matter how, they have to respect each other but the wife has to respect the husband as a subordinate to the husband, when you show respect he understands you"*.

Women are responsible for the large majority of domestic work. Their responsibilities include to; fetch water, clean and 'arrange' the house, to wash clothes, to do all activities around food preparation including shopping at the market and to care for children and sick people. Some women will have 'helpers' at home, often young girls who can assist them in the housework. As much as women seem to increasingly engage in domains which were formerly exclusively the domain of men, as little do men venture into 'female domains' such as in the domestic sphere; reproductive work such as food preparation, child's care, cleaning. When young women for instance discuss 'gender equality' they say the following: *"I think it's a good thing [gender equality] but it doesn't mean that the men should do women chores like cleaning or cooking, while the wife is sitting at home or goes out to bars or elsewhere and comes home late and even starts shouting that the husband should not ask her where*

*she's been 'because they are equal'. I think it's good to change the mindset but people should not forget their roles in the house".*

Young men define gender equality as 'sharing responsibilities in the household'; these responsibilities though, only seem to refer to the financial burden of the household and making money. The only mention of men possibly taking on some of the domestic work considered as 'women's work' is made by poor women. When pathways to move out of poverty are discussed, they suggest that in prosperous households a husband can look after the children when his wife is out for some business activity. Overall gender equality is conceived as having to do with mutual respect and complementarity rather than equal abilities and the opportunities, free from stereotypes and norms, to develop these and men status as head of household and superior remains undebated.

## 2.2 WOMEN'S AND MEN'S ROLES IN AGRICULTURAL/NRM LIVELIHOODS

Both men and women usually engage in agricultural production but many crops or practices are gendered. Also the level of access to and control over resources, especially to land, is very different for men and women. Especially for women access and control tends to change following marital status. Both men and women make a lot of reference to the gendered nature of specific crops; banana is exclusively presented as a man's crop, beans are usually presented as a woman's crop. Food crops are generally considered as women's crop. Banana is consumed at home but also sold at the market and the derived income is for men. Although women will often weed in banana plantations they are less involved in its production than men. There are also some crops for which there is a less clear gender divide such as for instance for maize. This might be because maize is a relatively new crop in this community so there is no large history of cultivation. Apart from beans, vegetables and maize are nowadays important crops for women. Vegetable growing is usually at the homestead and therefore easy for women to combine with household chores. Girls will often already start growing beans on a small plot when they're in their early teenage years, usually for sales and for food consumption.

It's becoming more common for women to sell part of their produce and gain some economic independence from their husband. For banana this is different though; women can sometimes harvest a banana bunch for household consumption but they cannot harvest banana to sell it at the market or to make banana-beer. Apart from banana, men are engaged with tree planting for erosion control and timber use and sales. Timber is used for house construction and charcoal production, both 'male' activities, is important for income generation and for erosion control. It is men who are considered the primary responsible for erosion control. This is likely linked to the associated land claim and men's traditional position as land owner. Young women also mention that women are much too busy with their domestic chores to have time to plant trees all day long. Women working outside the own farm for income, used to be unacceptable for most husbands; this seems to be changing however. In most households it is now normal for a woman to earn a small income through engaging in petty-trade, sales of food crop surpluses and casual farm labor.

In general, women enjoy increased agency to participate in household decision-making, manage income and inherit. The latter is supported by national law and policies. But a wife should always discuss with her husband and not act alone or without his consent. For instance if a woman



receives an inheritance she has to discuss with her husband on how to use it. Most participants also think he should discuss with her if the situation was reversed but there is less urgency.

Although reference is often made to husbands who 'do not allow' their wife to engage in economic and community activities, this is usually in a disapproval fashion. Such a husband is called 'too authoritarian' and seen by both men and women as blocking the development of the household.

## 2.3 LOCAL NORMS SURROUNDING WOMEN'S PHYSICAL MOBILITY AND INCLUSION

Our data suggests that women enjoy increased mobility and inclusion in comparison to a decade ago. This can for instance be derived from the growth in economic activities in which women engage and the increased numbers of local organizations that support women's economic activities such as women's groups and Saving and credit organizations (Sacco's). Economic activities for women like selling vegetables in the local market for instance, or setting up small businesses related to beauty care or food preparation have become common whereas they did not exist for women in the past. It is now commonly accepted that women will participate in things like agricultural training and group activities. Women explain that they have all been 'opened the eyes' by the government. They have received training. For instance agricultural extension office do not give preference to either men or women in offering training or advice. In the whole of Rwanda female leadership is also more and more common; half of the members of the community council are women for instance and women are also included in the local government and elected in leadership positions.

Adult women sketch a normative picture of a past in which women 'belonged' in the house and were not involved in economic activities. Even for very poor, food insecure households, women would work as casual laborer on other people's farm in secret, because men would not accept it. Leaving the house was considered inappropriate and associated with sexual promiscuity. Women's mobility was controlled by their husband and dependent on spousal consent.

Women and men, both young and older, express diverging opinions about the current norms associated with women's mobility, engagement in economic activity and inclusion. On the one hand norms restricting women's mobility and inclusion seem to be relaxing but on the other hand they are also still frequently mentioned. In our data it was especially the female youth who emphasized the actuality of norms that associate women's mobility with sexual promiscuity. Most of the girls argue for instance that a 'respectful wife' will not leave the house without informing her husband or even asking him for permission. They also discuss the risk for young girls to be considered as prostitutes by the community, when they work outside the community, migrate temporarily or 'behave in a certain way'. Adult women on the contrary emphasize the relaxation of these norms, one adult woman describes the change as follows: *"It was not only in the mind of women but also in the men's mind; women going out, was not seen well. Now, the husband encourages his wife to work and bring money home. You are no longer obliged to ask everything from the husband"*. Men tend to have more freedom to go places beyond the own compound and the fields. As a man from a FGD is saying for instance *"a man can go to the bar while his wife is preparing dinner at home, but the opposite is as good as impossible"*.

In the focus groups for young men and women, the participants were asked to rank on a scale of 1-10 the number of women that are able to move freely in the community. Young women ranked this at 4.3 on average, while for young men this was 5.8. Young women's account for giving their respective explanations are contradicting. Some women say that spousal consent is absolutely

necessary and only women who don't respect their husband will go somewhere without asking. Other women say they see women moving around to work everyday and their husband can just trust them. Young men agree amongst themselves that women can move freely through the village as they want but they do need to tell their husband where they're going.

Also when it comes to women working outside of their own household both men and women from the 'poor' focus groups agree that it has become more common. The poor men think though that this is mostly true for young single and married women while older women have less need to work. They argue that if women have educated adult children, they don't have to work as their children will take care of them now.

In conclusion, women's mobility is expanding but still tainted by normative ideas which present women's place in first instance within the family compound. Women often need spousal consent when they want to go somewhere. This strongly contrasts with men who can go anywhere provided they have the resources.

## 2.4 FAMILY FORMING

It is common for girls to start living with men (cohabitation) at 17-18 years of age. Although for girls which are educated and that have a job this can be later, going up to about 30 years of age. Marriage for either sex is not allowed below 21 years. Girls who don't have a job cannot get married later than at 25 years. For boys the average age to get married is 25 years, both young men and women agree. An exception would be for boys that impregnate a under-age girl, they will be forced to marry in order to avoid being arrested. Marriage is a decision of both the man and woman involved without strong involvement of parents or other people. The man though should take the initiative to propose marriage. The man is also responsible to prepare a house for the couple.

The majority of girls have their first child before 18 years of age in the community. But both young men and women feel that it would be better for the child and mother if women had their first child somewhat later at 23-25 years of age. At this age she's more mature both physically and mentally and therefore has more chances to be successful. Women indicate that it is primarily men who decide how many children will be conceived. They are often unable to use anti-conception without approval of their spouse. Although young men say couples take decisions about getting having children together, young women feel that it is ultimately the husband who decides.

## 2.5 DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Eight out of ten women in the poor FGD indicate that domestic violence inflicted by men on their spouse was frequent 10 years ago. Half of the men in the poor FGD also indicate this used to be frequent. Poor women narrate that in the past it was considered normal for a woman to be beaten by her spouse. Nowadays domestic violence is punishable by law and both women and men are more and more aware of that, in addition they have received sensitization from government and NGOs about women's rights. Although both men and women indicate that domestic violence is still prevalent they both report a decrease in occurrence in comparison with a decade ago. None of the women however say that domestic violence currently happens 'almost never' and only two out of ten men say this.



Both men and women generally consider domestic violence as a concern in the community; they report impoverishment of the household as a likely consequence of domestic violence for instance. Women also express their worries about negative effects on children in the household, who might feel insecure. Causes for the decline in GBV are a combination of government policy (criminalizing domestic violence) and awareness campaigns and trainings.

## 3. AGENCY AND INNOVATION IN AGRICULTURE

### 3.1 LEVELS OF AND TRENDS IN EMPOWERMENT

In both men and women's perception the level of power and freedom for the own sex has increased compared to ten years ago. Currently men place themselves on average on step 4 of the 5-step ladder while women have risen to step 3.5. Young men place themselves on step 2.8 and young women, consistent with the older middle-class women, on step 3.5.

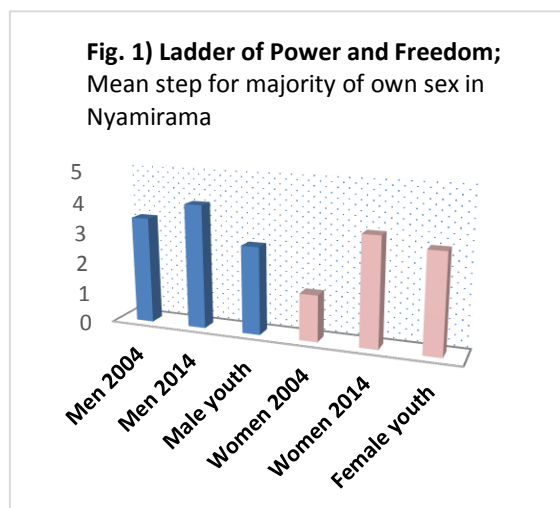
Some middle-class men position men in the community on the top step (5) claiming that all decisions in the household are ultimately for the husband to take and therefore they are on step 5. Others argue though, that this is largely true but that certain decisions need to be discussed with the wife, and they therefore place men on step 4. Again others refer to the past; 10 years ago many men were in jail and their wives were left alone to fend for themselves, on their return they couldn't just claim back all power. They had to give space to their wives.

Women report a considerable increase of two full steps on the ladder of power and freedom.

Young girls feel that they make most major life decisions independently; they choose who to marry and choose to go and look for a job. Their parents will also often consult them on important household decisions for instance about purchase of livestock. They will also be able to decide when, which household chores to do and if they have some money they can buy things from themselves. Often though, they feel financially dependent on the parents and that's why they're no higher up.

Young men differentiate between underage youth and those above 18, the former are mostly at step 2 of the ladder while the others can be at step 4. A lot of young men are still under the control of their parents and one young man that parents treat them as 'incapable children', this is reason to select step 2. Others say that young men can take important decisions, for instance about getting a job, themselves and place young men therefore on step 4.

Perceptions about power and freedom often make reference to the past war and genocide and to the punitive measures which followed in the aftermath. Quite a number of men in the community were charged with war crimes, spent time in jail and left their wives in charge of the household for a considerable time. Other families fled the war and spent time in refugee camps after which they were re-located to this community in the late 90s. Some families were formed in refugee camps. It is not surprising that this has affected people enormously. In the focus group with men, men claim that due to their long absence from the household, their wives assumed the role of 'head of household'. On their return, gender relations could not just revert to former times but had durably changed.



### 3.2 AGRICULTURAL AND NRM INNOVATIONS

A total of 30 different innovations are listed by men and women in the total of six FGDs. Half of these are only listed in one FGD, the other 15 are listed in two or more FGDs (see annex 1). The table below shows all the innovations which were listed in four FGDs or more. After listing all the innovations that came up in the community over the past 10 years, men and women were asked to select the two most important ones for their own sex and for the opposite sex. All of these innovations selected in the 'top two' (see table 2) but one, overlap with those innovations identified most consistently in all FGDs. Land consolidation is listed in four FGDs but not selected for the top two in any FGD.

Table 2: Innovations listed in four or more FGDs

Innovation	Listed by # of Male FGD	Listed by # of Female FGD	Comments // domain
Use of (organic, mineral or chemical) fertilizer	3	3	Increased productivity
Terraces	3	2	Erosion control
Modern banana production	2	3	Increased productivity
Kitchen garden production	3	2	Household nutrition and food security
Zero-grazing livestock	2	2	Integrated farming
Land consolidation	3	1	Economies of scale

Most of the innovations consistently listed in more than one FGD and selected for the top two are so-called 'hard system innovations', and relate to either increased agricultural productivity or natural resource management through erosion control. This is for instance the case for 'use of fertilizer', for 'improved management / cultivation' of banana and maize and for 'making terraces'. One of the innovations listed four or more times is 'land consolidation' though. This is a government-driven innovation that promotes collective production of a single crop in a mono-crop system in a single consolidated field. Land consolidation is listed by all men groups and by young women and one of the few 'soft system' innovations listed. It is likely that men are more directly involved in this as the 'head of the household'.

In the middle-class and young women FGD quite a number of non-agricultural innovations are listed. These include: availability of improved cooking stoves, bio-gas for light and cooking, access to electricity and running water and the presence of a dealer in agro-inputs in the community. All these innovations are important for shaping the enabling environment

## TOP TWO FOR WOMEN

When asked what the two most important innovations are for each gender, women in all three FGDs list an innovation linked to maize. In two groups, women list improved maize management which includes sowing in lines and use of fertilizer. In the group of middle-class women, 'new varieties of maize' are identified as one of two most important innovations. Maize is important for women because it serves both as food and cash crop. Children can eat fresh maize when food supply is limited and women can mill part of the production and sell it on the market. Maize stalks can be used to feed livestock or as mulch in the banana plantation.

When men were asked which two innovations are most important for women they did not mention maize at all. Men do identify in all three men FGDs that kitchen garden production is important for women. Also the women in both adult women's FGDs identify the production of

vegetables in the kitchen garden as most important. Both men and women mention the value of the kitchen garden produce (vegetables) for children’s nutrition specifically. In addition, the small-scale production of vegetables in the homestead is considered convenient and easy; women don’t have to move out and maintenance demands are limited.

In the young women’s group improved access to water is listed as the number one innovation. They argue that this is specifically important to women as they often are obliged to fetch water from afar and because women need water all day for all their domestic tasks like washing clothes and cooking. Other innovations which men identify as most important for women is the zero-grazing of cows (mentioned by middle-class men) and the availability of new seeds in general (mentioned by poor men) and for beans (mentioned by young men). Young men say that women are interested in beans because they are easy to cultivate, unlike maize, and that they can use beans both for household food consumption and sales.

*Table 3: The top 2 most important innovations for men and women in the community as identified in the different FGDs*

FGD	Top 2 for Women by women	Top 2 for Women by men	Top 2 for men by women	Top 2 for men by men
Poor Adult	1. Planting maize using manure and mineral fertilizer, on line and mono-cropping	1. Improved seeds	1. Managing banana crop in a modern way	1. Managing banana crop in a modern way
	2. kitchen garden production	2. kitchen garden production	2. Planting cassava using manure and fertilizer	2. The fight against erosion; making terraces and ridges
Middle-class adult	1. Kitchen garden production	1. kitchen garden production	1. cropping banana for dessert	1. Use of mineral and organic fertilizers
	2. new varieties of maize	2. zero grazing of exotic cows	2. zero grazing of exotic cows	2. Managing banana crop in a modern way
Young	1. Water access	1. Kitchen garden production	1. Planting trees	1. Use of mineral fertilizers
	2. Planting maize in-line	2. Improved bean seeds	2. New banana varieties	2. Improved maize seeds

## TOP TWO FOR MEN

The two most important innovations for men are quite distinct of those for women. The number one crop for men is banana; in two of the men’s and women’s FGDs modern or improved banana management is listed as most important for men. In addition young women list ‘use of new banana varieties’ in the top two for men. The only group which doesn’t list an innovation around banana at all is the young men’s group. This might be an indication that banana farming is not accessible or interesting for young men. In men and women’s narratives about the ‘most important innovations’ Banana is said to be the most important livelihood source to men; it provides them with money but also gives them security.

Men in all FGDs list a number of innovations around soil erosion control and agro-forestry, women also mention a few but are less detailed. Innovations listed related to erosion control are: Creation of terraces, reforestation of hills, using agro-forestry species and creating contour ridges. Poor men list ‘the fight against soil erosion’ as second most important innovation and young women list the ‘planting of trees’ as number one innovation for men. All the innovations mentioned around erosion-control and planting trees are considered to be in the domain of men.

Middle-class and young men consider ‘the use of fertilizer’ as a very important innovation and also poor women list ‘cassava cultivation using manure and fertilizer’ among the top two for men.

Young men list ‘improved seed for maize’ in their top two and middle-class women consider the ‘zero-grazing of exotic cows’ as important for men.

## LOCAL GENDER NORMS AND AGRICULTURAL INNOVATIONS

The two innovations most consistently listed for men and for women by both sexes are ‘kitchen garden production’ for women and something on ‘banana varieties’ or ‘banana management’ for men. Both these innovations relate to traditional roles of women and men as responsible for meals and sauces and responsible for monetary income respectively. As one man says; women can only be responsible for those crops kept in the house. It is not far-fetched to assume that these listings for male and female –specific innovations are already indicative of gender norms. In individual interviews there was some diversion between actual practice and gender norms around cultivation.

The degree to which agricultural innovations are interesting, used or adopted by men and women farmers in the community depends on the nature of the innovation and the crop or practice to which it is linked. For example the extent to which an innovation is ‘land-bound’ is an important dimension which largely determines for whom and not for whom the innovation is relevant. Although this particular dimension is not 100% aligned with gender, access and control over land are strongly gendered.

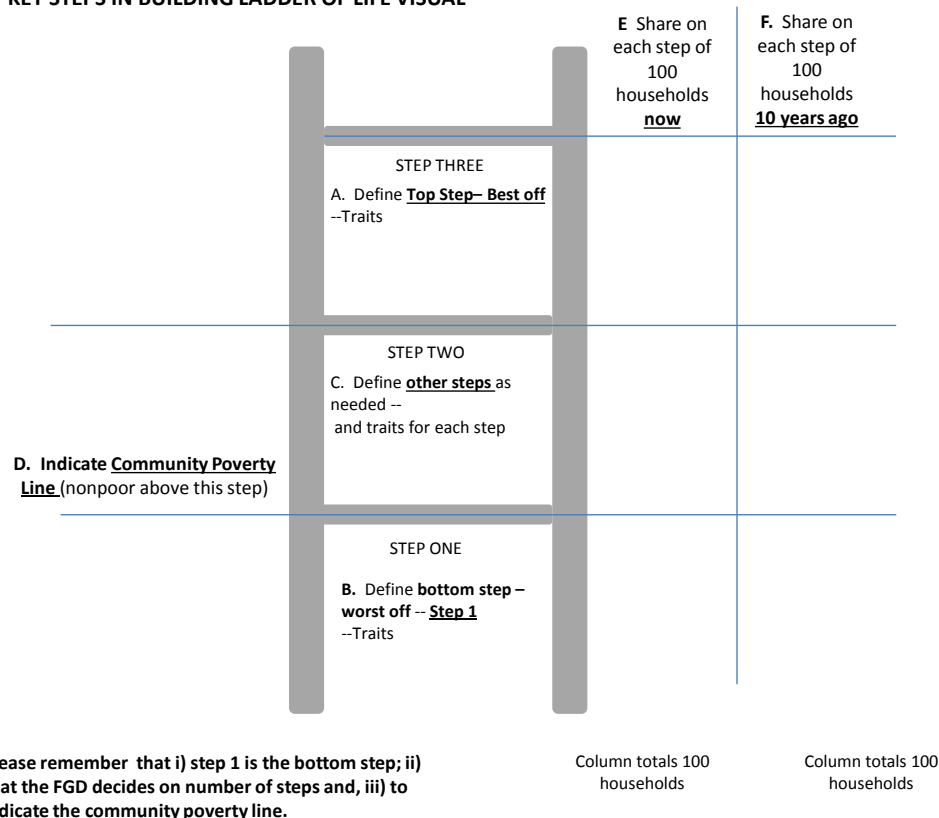
Some crops or practices are more embedded in strict gender normative frameworks than others. Banana is an example of a crop strongly associated with manhood (masculinity), provider-role and a claim on land. For maize, a relatively new crop which is annual and cultivation therefore does not exude a land claim, this is very different. Innovations linked to maize are therefore more accessible to both men and women. On basis of our current data it is not possible to indicate if gender norms dynamics are driven by agricultural innovation.

## 4. SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC MOBILITY

### 4.1 LADDERS OF LIFE – WEALTH RANKING

Ladders of life, essentially a participatory wealth-ranking exercise, were conducted with men and women focus group discussions, following the visual below.

KEY STEPS IN BUILDING LADDER OF LIFE VISUAL



The ladders of men and women both have 5 steps. Both also indicate that those on step 1-3 (from below) are considered as poor; in other words the community poverty line (cpl) is situated between step 3 and 4 on the ladder (table 4). Women provide much more detail in describing the steps on the ladder than men. Their first indicator for wealth is land ownership and size of the land owned. Households on step 1-3 have no land (step 1), a tiny plot (step 2) or cultivate on less than a hectare (step 3). Those on step 4 and 5 own more than one hectare of land. The ‘very rich’ on step 5 have diversified income sources coming from for instance retail and transport businesses aside from agriculture. The typical smallholder farming household can be found on step 3 (the resourceful poor) and 4 (the rich): these households live from their agricultural production on their own land. Households on step 2 (the very poor) mainly work as casual laborer on other people’s land or rent land in sharecropping agreements. Households on step 1 are typified as the old and handicapped who do not have children and do not work. Households on step 2 and 3 receive assistance from the government to send children to school and to pay medical insurance (step 2), they might also benefit from government programs such as the ‘one cow per family’ (step 3). Only households above the cpl never have food shortages and can afford to send their children to secondary school and beyond.

The focus groups were asked to compare the current wealth distribution with the situation of 10 years back. Both men’s and women’s groups report significant change over time. According to men, there were no households on step 4 and 5, above the cpl, in 2005. All households were poor and a majority was ‘very poor’ (50%) or ‘very, very poor’ (25%) in 2005, they say. They thus report a movement out of poverty (from below to above the cpl) of 30% in the period 2005-2015. Women report a limited movement out of poverty of only 6%. They do report quite a change in the distribution of households below the cpl when comparing 2015 with 2005: where in 2005 40% of the households was classified as ‘very, very poor’ (rung 1) or ‘very poor’ (rung 2), this was only 20% in 2015; the absolute majority of households was now classified as ‘resourceful poor’ (rung 3). With regards to the percentage of households in the community living above the cpl in 2015 there is not much difference between perceptions of men and women with reported percentages of 30 and 25 respectively (see table 4).

*Table 4: Wealth ranking & distribution as perceived by male and female FGDs for 2015 and 2005 in Nyamirama sector, Kayonza expressed in percentages (%) of households*

Step on the ladder	Female - 2015	Male - 2015	Female - 2005	Male - 2005
5 ‘very rich’	5	10	5	0
4 ‘rich’	20	20	15	0
3 ‘resourceful poor’	55	45	40	25
2 ‘very poor’	15	20	30	50
1 ‘very, very poor’	5	5	10	25

## 4.2 MOVING OUT OF POVERTY

Land ownership is main indicator for wealth ranking in this community; this directly reflects the (large) importance of farming as a livelihood in Nyamirama. Consequently, access to other productive resources important for farming, access to markets, access to information and knowledge related to farming are all of central importance to people in Nyamirama. This access is quite different for households and individual members of households according as their socio-economic position (reflected in the above wealth classification). Households and their members classified on step 1 or 2 for instance tend to access knowledge and information about farming and innovations (if at all) mainly from the people they work for. Those on step 3 and 4 on the contrary, usually have access to extension agents but are potentially also approached and informed by representatives from research and development organizations (NGOs). Access to productive resources such as farm tools tends to be non-existent or very limited for those on the lower steps; they might not even own a hoe or panga.

Gender differences are not explicit in narratives about what one can do to move the household out of poverty. Farming in ‘a modern way’ and following advice from extension agents / agronomists is mentioned as essential for both men and women to move their household out of poverty. In addition both FGDs provide long lists of ‘do not’s’ in relation to climbing up the ladder in terms of wealth accumulation. Men and women should not engage in promiscuous behavior and extra-marital relationships, they should not consume too much alcohol, and they should not waste money on either of these. Laziness is mentioned as a threat to progress as is domestic violence and conjugal conflict. Spouses should ideally work together and make large decisions together, both men and women say. Men can support their wives and thus the household as whole by investing in a

business for her; rearing goats or retail of basic food items, for instance. Household on step 2 and above can move out of poverty by making the best of governmental support programs that exist, for instance for women to develop commercial activities. Harmony in the household and specifically between spouses is mentioned as a prerequisite for households to progress and move out of poverty.

### DRIVERS OF WEALTH DYNAMICS

Overall in the community, levels of extreme poverty have reduced in the perceptions of both women and men. Although small percentages of households in the community are perceived to have moved completely out of poverty, the majority of the population is still considered as 'poor'. The main drivers of the positive changes identified are:

- Government programs which support poor people, allowing them to move out of extreme poverty;
- Overall stability and absence of war which allowed people to build up their livelihoods and accumulate assets after the 1994 war and genocide against the Tutsi's;
- Individual or household level efforts with regards to: 'modern farming', use of birth control and 'joint decision-making and saving' often promoted by non-governmental and governmental agencies



## 5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

### 5.1 ARE GENDER NORMS CHANGING?

Significant and important changes are observed in women and men’s narratives about gender equality, gender-based violence and women’s agency and economic participation. These changes are in line with national-measured indicators on gender from for instance the World Bank as presented in the table below. At the same time, large inequalities at especially the household and community level coupled with persisting gender norms which negatively affect women’s decision-making power and opportunities for economic participation, remain in place.

Table 5: World Bank Indicators: (<https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SG.VAW.REAS.ZS?locations=RW>)

INDICATOR	1 <sup>st</sup> data point in time	2 <sup>nd</sup> data point in time
WOMEN PARTICIPATING IN THE THREE DECISIONS (OWN HEALTH CARE, MAJOR HOUSEHOLD PURCHASES, AND VISITING FAMILY) (% OF WOMEN AGE 15-49)	39.3 (2000)	65.4 (2015)
PROPORTION OF SEATS HELD BY WOMEN IN NATIONAL PARLIAMENTS (%)	17 (1990)	61 (2017)
PROPORTION OF WOMEN SUBJECTED TO PHYSICAL AND/OR SEXUAL VIOLENCE IN THE LAST 12 MONTHS (% OF WOMEN AGE 15-49)	44.3 (2010)	20.7 (2015)
Women who believe a husband is justified in beating his wife when she goes out without telling him (%)	36.6 (2000)	22.3 (2015)
WOMEN WHO BELIEVE A HUSBAND IS JUSTIFIED IN BEATING HIS WIFE (ANY REASON) (%)	63.3 (2000)	40.7 (2015)

Relaxation of gender norms is especially observed around economic participation of women; it is more and more normal for women to earn a (small) income, working outside of the household. The main drivers of normative change are national law and policy criminalizing GBV and promoting inclusion of women in the public and economic domain. These policies are reinforced by local organizations promoting gender equality and women’s economic empowerment. In this arena of changing or contested gender norms, women have increased opportunities to engage in agricultural innovation, for instance because they are able to follow trainings, join women’s group and control income they make. Men and women alike acknowledge that women have positive contributions to make to

household's income and asset building and to co-decide on important household matters and that doing so can contribute to moving households out of poverty. This is not withstanding that women are still supposed to work in their husband's fields and plantation and conduct most reproductive work such as caring for children, food preparation and cleaning. Also the production of beans and other food crops, apart from staples such as banana and cereals, for the household's consumption continues being the responsibility of women. Women's tasks and responsibilities are de factor increasing which creates a danger of women becoming (increasingly) overburdened. There is little discussion nor mention about men 'taking over' women's tasks and responsibilities.

Women's mobility or freedom of movement has increased but spousal consent is still considered a requirement for married women and reflects traditional gender norms which continue to consider men as superior.

## **5.2 IMPLICATIONS FOR RESEARCH, AGRICULTURAL INNOVATION AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT.**

Regulation, education, raising awareness, building capacity: it all works in influencing change in gender norms which promote gender inequality. Few programs though address root causes of gender inequality or address the underlying assumption that men are superior to women and women owe obedience to men. Time will tell if changes in gender roles starting with modest economic empowerment will eventually lead to more equality between men and women including more space for both women and men to develop their abilities as they want, without being limited by gender stereotypes.

For now, research and development initiatives aiming for agricultural innovation and rural development should aim to understand local gender norms and to identify gender dynamics and drivers of change in order to 1) respond adequately to local needs of women and men in regard to farming and NRM without doing harm to either gender and 2) to contribute or reinforce to processes of change which promote women's empowerment and gender equality.

Some of the methods used in this case-study such as listing, ranking and discussing agricultural innovations, are good entry points for understanding gender dynamics around very specific agri-practices. Different tools and guidelines for researching gender norms and agency in relation agricultural innovation are available on the website of GENNOVATE <http://gender.cgiar.org/themes/gennovate/>.

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