



**Universidad  
Europea** VALENCIA

## **INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS GLOBAL DEGREE**

Bachelor's Thesis

**"Rwanda's Path to Gender Equality: Achievements,  
Challenges, and the Need for Social Transformation"**

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## Abstract

This bachelor's thesis studies the effectiveness of Rwanda's policies implemented by the government of Paul Kagame since the end of the 1994 genocide, towards achieving women's empowerment and gender equality or SDG 5. Significant accomplishments are highlighted throughout the study, including increased women's political engagement, the establishment of an inclusive National Gender Policy, and improvements in women's economic empowerment. Nevertheless, the deeply ingrained gender norms and behaviors in Rwandan culture continue to raise challenges and obstruct progress toward achieving SDG 5. The study's findings emphasize the need to address deeply rooted gender norms in order to achieve gender equality. Although the government's efforts were significant in the fight against gender inequality, they must be reinforced by broad public acceptance and support of gender equality. Overall, the results highlight the need for a socio-cultural transformation to create a more inclusive, just, and egalitarian society in Rwanda.

**Keywords:** Rwanda, Women, Gender Equality, Empowerment, SDG 5, Patriarchy

## Resumen

Este Trabajo Fin de Grado estudia la eficacia de las políticas de Ruanda, implementadas por el gobierno de Paul Kagame desde el final del genocidio de 1994, para lograr el empoderamiento de las mujeres y la igualdad de género o ODS 5. A lo largo del estudio se destacan logros significativos, como el aumento de la participación política de las mujeres, el establecimiento de una Política Nacional de Género inclusiva y las mejoras para el empoderamiento económico de las mujeres. Sin embargo, las normas y conductas relativas al género profundamente arraigadas en la cultura ruandesa siguen planteando retos y obstaculizando el progreso hacia la consecución del ODS 5. Las conclusiones del análisis subrayan la necesidad de abordar normas de género profundamente arraigadas para lograr la igualdad de género. Aunque los esfuerzos del Gobierno fueron significativos en la lucha contra la desigualdad de género, deben reforzarse con una amplia aceptación y apoyo público de la igualdad de género. En general, los resultados ponen de relieve la

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necesidad de una transformación sociocultural para crear una sociedad más inclusiva, justa e igualitaria en Ruanda.

**Palabras clave:** Ruanda, Mujeres, Igualdad de Género, Empoderamiento, ODS 5, Patriarcado

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## Abbreviations

Abbreviation	Meaning
FAR	Forces Armées Rwandaises
UN	United Nations
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
RPF	Rwandan Patriotic Front
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
VAC	Violence Against Children
MIGEPROF	Ministry of Gender and Family Promotion
NWC	National Women's Council
FFRP	Forum for Women Parliamentarians
GMO	Gender Monitoring Office
BDF	Business Development Fund

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## I. INTRODUCTION

In order to have a better general understanding of the research topic, the following section, addresses the gender context of Rwanda and its relationship to Sustainable Development Goal 5 (SDG 5), as well as its connection to SDG 17 and the Millennium Development Goals.

### 1. Gender Context of Rwanda

The Republic of Rwanda, is a geographically small country located in east-central Africa with a total population of around 13.5 million in 2021, which is the highest population density in sub-Saharan Africa (Clay & Lemarchand, 2023). Internationally it gained sad notoriety for the genocide in 1994.

The two major ethnic groups in Rwanda -the Tutsi, and the Hutu- have been in conflict for decades. While Hutus make up over 85% of Rwandans, the Tutsi minority has historically ruled the country (BBC, 2019). However, in 1994 the genocide was planned by extremist elements within Rwanda's majority Hutu population, who planned to murder the minority Tutsi community and anyone who opposed them (Enciclopedia Británica, 2022). More than 500,000 Rwandans were killed during the genocide, and the large population shifts that followed created a humanitarian disaster. In reaction to the crisis, there was a vast international response, however many complained that the help arrived late when all the cruelty was already done (Newbury & Baldwin, 2000).

Massive sexual abuse against Rwandan women occurred during the 1994 genocide. The perpetrators were mainly military personnel of the Rwandan Armed Forces -Forces Armées Rwandaises (FAR) in French- notably the Presidential Guard, ordinary citizens, and members of the notorious Hutu militia organizations known as the Interahamwe. (Nowrojee, 1996).

According to the United Nations (UN), between 100.000 and 250.000 women were raped during the Rwandan genocide. Many survivor testimonies show that rape was extremely common and that “thousands of women were individually raped, gang-raped, raped with objects such as sharpened sticks or gun barrels, held in

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sexual slavery (either collectively or through forced "marriage") or sexually mutilated." (Nowrojee, 1996). As a result, the victims suffered and still suffer nowadays from health issues such as sexually transmitted diseases -HIV/AIDS- and from self-induced or illegal abortions. Furthermore, many victims who were raped during the genocide, consequently, became pregnant, leading to children abandonment and severe health issues among pregnant young girls. (UN, n.d.-b).

Although this conflict was carved out on women's bodies as the victims of rape and sexual torture, it might have ironically contributed to the "improvement" of the situation of women in Rwanda nowadays. After the 100-day-lasting genocide, the majority of the population of Rwanda became female. The causes for this shift in gender demographics are numerous and complicated, however, there are several crucial factors that must be examined.

First, men were disproportionately targeted and killed during the genocide, often leaving women as the only survivors in their families. Women were also more likely to survive because they could hide or run away, but men were more likely to be apprehended and killed. As a result, there was a notable gender disparity in the population.

Furthermore, Rwanda has traditionally been a patriarchal society, in which men held more power and authority than women. Nonetheless, women also had a crucial role in Rwandan society, notably in agriculture, where they made up most of the workforce. However, many males were imprisoned or fled the nation during the genocide, which consequently forced women to take over new roles and responsibilities in their communities. Taking on leadership roles, caring for orphaned children, and helping to restore their communities were tasks frequently assigned to women. Traditional gender roles in Rwanda were shifted after the genocide, and women had to take over new forms of emancipation, due to the increasing visibility and responsibility for women.

Finally, Rwanda has developed initiatives and policies to advance gender equality. These include expanding access to healthcare and education for women as well as encouraging their involvement in politics and leadership positions. (Macauley,

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2013). According to the Gender Monitoring Office of the Republic of Rwanda, these initiatives have supported gender equality within the population and furthered the empowerment of women (Gender Monitoring Office, 2019).

A variety of factors, such as violence against men, expanded roles and responsibilities for women, and initiatives to advance gender equality, contributed to the complicated shift in gender demographics that occurred in Rwanda following the genocide. Overall, during the genocide, women were used as weapons of war through massive sexual abuse and rape to increase the population's fear.

The genocide left a traumatic legacy but also led to the development and progress in the gender dynamics of the nation. Much has changed in Rwanda's gender situation, particularly in the aftermath of the 1994 genocide, which left the majority of the population to be female. As a result of numerous policies aimed at empowering women and promoting gender equality, Rwanda has received recognition as a leader in women's rights in the African continent and the rest of the world. But, to what extent are Rwanda's gender policies contributing to gender equality as defined under Sustainable Development Goal number 5? In the case of Rwanda, can increase female political participation and gender-inclusive policy-making effectively address deeply ingrained societal gender norms, structures, and practices?

## **2. Sustainable Development Goal Number (SDG) 5 and its Link to SDG 17 and The Millennium Development Goals**

At an international level, many institutions have launched various programs and initiatives aimed at promoting gender equality, and these might have played a role in supporting Rwanda's and other states' efforts towards gender equality.

One of those strategies is the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The SDGs consist of 17 goals which were established by the UN in 2015 as part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Generally, the SDGs aim to end poverty, protect the environment, and promote prosperity. However, this study will focus specifically on one of its goals, SDG number 5.

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In particular, SDG 5 focuses on empowering all women and girls and achieving gender equality by 2030. It aims at promoting equal rights and opportunities for women and girls in all areas of life, including education, employment, and politics, in light of persistent gender inequalities worldwide. (UN, n.d.-c). The concept of gender equality is described under SDG 5 as “not only a fundamental human right but a necessary foundation for a peaceful, prosperous and sustainable world” (UN, n.d.-a).

SDG 5, as well as the rest of SDGs, is strongly connected to SDG 17. As outlined in SDG 17, this goal aims at strengthening the means of implementation and revitalizing the global partnership for sustainable development. In order to achieve the 17th goal, countries, stakeholders, and sectors will need to form strong partnerships and collaborate effectively. This process includes supporting developing countries financially and technologically, improving their access to markets, and promoting technology transfer. Regarding SDG 5, SDG 17 is a key element, which emphasizes the need for global cooperation and partnerships promoting gender equality and women's empowerment. (UN, n.d.-c). Some of these efforts could be encouraging women to be involved in decision-making processes, supporting policies and programs that are gender-responsive, and investing in gender-disaggregated data and research. Overall, SDG 17 is assuring the implementation of all the SDGs, and this is the reason why it is essential to achieve SDG 17 in the first place in order to achieve SDG 5.

It is important to mention that the 2030 Agenda is not the only program that plays an essential role in achieving gender equality. The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) have also played an important role in this topic. The MDGs consisted of 8 goals that were in force from 2000 to 2015 and laid the groundwork for the current SDGs. (UN, n.d.-d).

Although gender equality was not a standalone aim within the MDGs, it was included in the other 7 goals that indirectly led to gender equality. Poverty reduction efforts under MDG 1 reduced gender disparities caused by economic inequality; MDG 2 increased girls' access to education, narrowing the gender gap; MDG 3 focused on empowering women and advancing gender equality; and in MDG 5, women's rights and health needs were recognized and improved maternal health.

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Overall, the Millennium Development Goals stimulated global awareness and partnerships for gender equality. (Sweetman, 2005).

Nonetheless, the MDGs had limitations and gaps in their implementation pertaining to addressing gender equality in full. Yet, the MDGs set the foundation and laid the groundwork for SDG 5, which explicitly aim at achieving gender equality and empowering women and girls. In other words, the MDGs' accomplishments and lessons achieved are built upon by the SDGs. SDG 5 adopts a more thorough and focused strategy addressing the unique difficulties and impediments that women and girls have to face in achieving gender equality.

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## II. RESEARCH QUESTION

The main goal of this research paper aims at assessing the effectiveness of Rwanda's gender policies and strategies towards achieving gender equality, as described under SDG number 5, since the end of the genocide in 1994. Specifically, it seeks to study the impact of these actions on the social, economic, and political empowerment of women. Given this goal, the study will be conducted led by the following research questions: To what extent are Rwanda's gender policies contributing to gender equality as defined under SDG 5? Can increase female political participation and gender-inclusive policymaking effectively address Rwanda's deeply ingrained societal gender norms, structures, and practices?

It is important to address this topic for various reasons. On one hand, Rwanda has achieved recognition by the international community for its significant efforts in promoting gender equality and women's empowerment, which makes this case study a great example for understanding the relationship between gender policy and sustainable development. On the other hand, by assessing how much Rwanda's gender policies have contributed to gender equality, this research paper hopes to add to the investigation of gender equality contexts and contribute useful information on the efficiency of certain policy measures. Finally, analyzing the effects of gender policy within this framework might help to better understand how to execute the SDGs, more specifically SDG 5, which have become a universal paradigm for tackling global concerns.

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### III. METHODOLOGY

To address this research paper, an in-depth assessment of Rwanda's gender policies and strategies was carried out through a mixed-methods approach, with an emphasis on their alignment with the SDG 5 objectives and indicators. This information was obtained by collecting qualitative and quantitative data, from primary and secondary sources which can be mainly found online<sup>1</sup>. Such as statistical analysis by the government of Rwanda, websites and official reports of the government and international and non-governmental organizations, articles, journals, and databases.

The task at hand was to carry out the research by first gathering and then analyzing past and current data on the main achievements, challenges, and outcomes of the efforts Rwanda's government has been making toward achieving gender equality since the end of the genocide in 1994. In doing so, the main purpose has been to find a central idea that would help answer the question about the effectiveness of Rwanda's gender-inclusive actions in addressing the gender norm structure that persists among Rwanda's population.

This study focuses mainly on the economic and political empowerment of women as a specific target of SDG 5 due to the limitations of the study's extension. An in-depth examination of these issues provides a more holistic view of the challenges and possibilities that women face in achieving equality. However, it is crucial to mention that the significance of the rest of the aspects of gender equality, such as women's access to education and health, should not be diminished by this focus, and should be examined deeper in further investigation.

Finally, it is important to mention that this research is carried out from a Western perspective on gender equality. The view on gender equality expressed in this paper is impacted by a European cultural background and personal experiences as a young Western female student. Therefore, in this paper gaps inevitably remain due to a lack of personal knowledge concerning the different challenges Rwandan citizens face every day. Nevertheless, this paper remains committed to undertaking

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<sup>1</sup> All electronic sources that were consulted in this work were last accessed on June 20, 2023.

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this study with an open mind, a strong commitment to inclusiveness and diversity, and a sincere motivation to take part in the gender equality discussion.



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## **IV. RESEARCH FINDINGS**

To analyze the effectiveness of Rwanda's strategies of achieving gender equality, it is important to have an overall knowledge of both, the main achievements, and the main challenges. This chapter draws a general idea of the main progress - such as the increase in women's political representation, economic empowerment, and the creation of the National Gender Policy - carried out by the government of Rwanda to achieve gender equality and more specifically, women's empowerment. However, the main challenges and setbacks in women's economic and political empowerment will also be outlined in this chapter, in order to have a better understanding of Rwanda's efficiency in achieving gender equality.

### **1. Main Achievements and Progress Towards SDG 5**

Since the 1994 genocide, there have been significant advancements in the realm of SDG 5 under President Paul Kagame's leadership. Kagame took over the government of the Republic of Rwanda in 2000 as the leader of the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF), after putting an end to the genocide, until today. In 2021 Rwanda was ranked 7th in the closing gender gaps in the Global Gender Gap report by the World Economic Forum (World Economic Forum, 2021).

#### **1.1. Increased Political Representation and Participation of Women**

An important step toward promoting democracy, human rights, and gender equality in Rwanda was taken with the 2003 Constitutional Reform, revised in 2015<sup>2</sup>. The changes attempted to establish the groundwork for a more inclusive and fair society while addressing the difficulties Rwanda faced in the wake of the genocide. As the post-genocide transition era came to its end in 2000, Rwanda began to work on a new constitution. A 12-member Constitutional Commission was appointed, with three members being women.

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<sup>2</sup> The Constitution of the Republic of Rwanda of 2003 Revised in 2015. (Rwanda, 2015). Official Gazette n° Special of 24/12/2015. Available at: [https://www.rwandabar.org.rw/attached\\_pdf/Constitution%20of%20the%20Republic%20of%20Rwanda-1608275353.pdf](https://www.rwandabar.org.rw/attached_pdf/Constitution%20of%20the%20Republic%20of%20Rwanda-1608275353.pdf)

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Women's organizations and activists were heavily involved in the drafting of Rwanda's constitution. They mobilized, and coordinated efforts with female legislators and the Ministry of Gender, and applied pressure to guarantee that gender equality was incorporated as a key concept into the new constitution. They tried to overcome historical discrimination and the exclusion of women via active participation, making equality an integral aspect of the Constitution. (Powley, 2005).

In May 2003, Rwanda's constitution was formally adopted, including a strong commitment to gender equality and what today is SDG 5. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)<sup>3</sup>, which Rwanda has ratified, is one of the international human rights documents and conventions mentioned in the preamble of the constitution (Powley, 2005). It expressly pledges to promote the ideals of gender equality and complementarity in national development and to provide equal rights for all Rwandans, including women and men. To uphold the core principle of the Constitution, the equality of all Rwandans, the constitution establishes that women must hold a minimum of 30 percent of positions in all decision-making organs. This quota strongly encourages women's representation and involvement in determining national policies and governance.

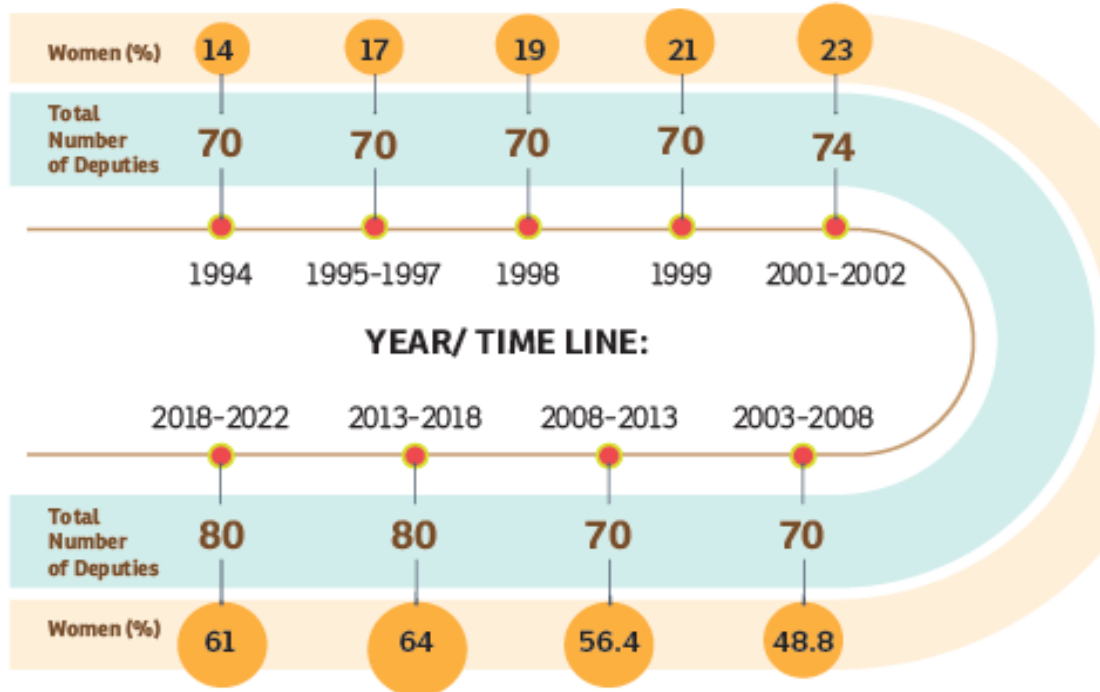
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<sup>3</sup> UN General Assembly, Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, 18 December 1979, United Nations, Treaty Series, vol. 1249, p. 13.  
<http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/cedaw.htm>.

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**Figure 1**

Women's Representation in Parliament.

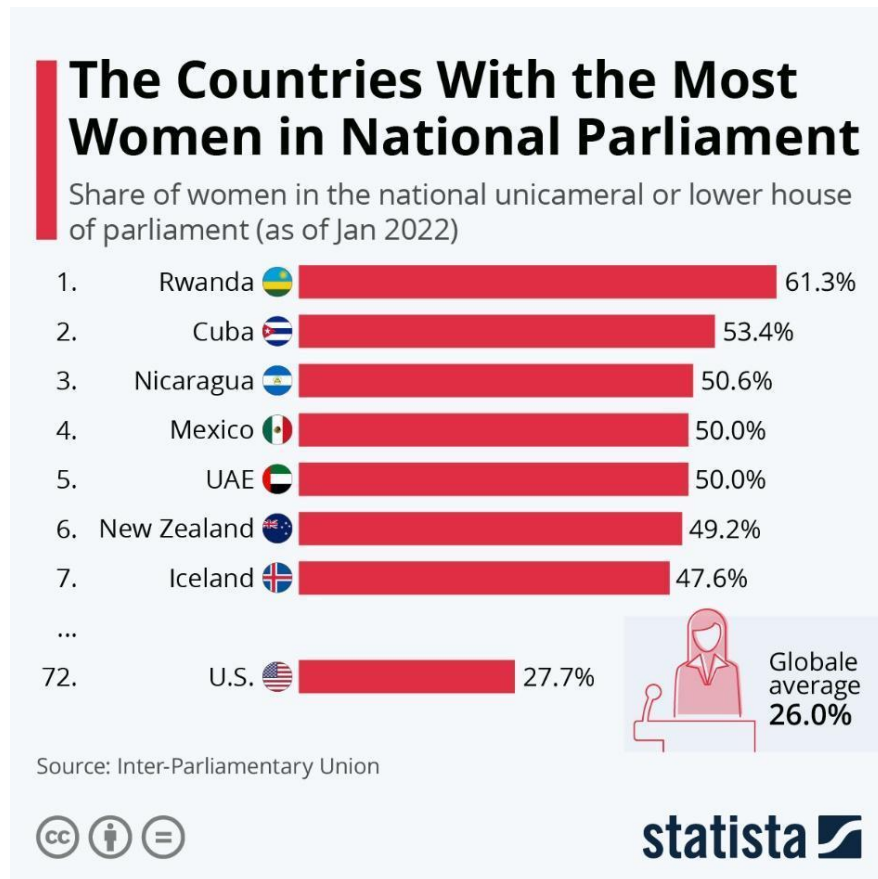


Source: (Gender Monitoring Office, 2019).

As can be seen in *Figure 1*, in the 1990s, women made up around 18% of the parliamentarians in Rwanda. However, due to the quota of 30% set in the 2003 Rwandan Constitution, women were able to achieve a higher representation in the following years. Women were able to make up 56% of the Parliament following the 2008 elections in Rwanda. In the 2013 elections, the percentage continued to increase, reaching 64% of women representation. And in 2018, Rwandan women reached the highest percentage until now, 61% of women's political representation in the national parliament. (UN Women, 2018)

**Figure 2**

Countries with the most women in national parliaments



Source: Bucholz (2022)

Nowadays, Rwanda holds a top ranking in countries with the most women in national parliament, with 61.3% in the Chamber of Deputies and 36% in the Senate. (Government of the Republic of Rwanda, n.d.). Although women's numerical representation in the parliament is outstanding, it is also important to translate this numerical representation into concrete results and ensure their significant participation. To make this possible, UN Women and other stakeholders are fully committed to achieving this goal. These efforts resulted in the creation of many laws and policies by the parliament, regarding crucial issues that women often face in Rwanda. Some examples are the prevention and punishment of gender-based violence (GBV) and violence against children (VAC), as well as reforms addressing

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gender discrimination in legislation for equal pay, equal inheritance and succession rights for men and women, and discrimination and sexual harassment at work.

Additionally, the Rwandan government has established specific institutions for gender equality and the empowerment of women, such as the Ministry of Gender and Family Promotion (MIGEPROF), the National Women's Council (NWC), the Forum for Women Parliamentarians (FFRP), and the Gender Monitoring Office (GMO). These institutional structures are in charge of making sure that policies are developed and coordinated, that women are mobilized and empowered, and that gender equality is achieved. (Government of the Republic Rwanda, 2019, p. 12).

The Ministry of Gender and Family Promotion replaced the Ministry of Gender, Family, and Social Affairs after the reorganization of the executive branch by the RPF in 1999. As a Central Government institution, it is actively involved in policy-making, program implementation, and coordination of initiatives across the country for addressing gender inequities and promoting women's rights. (MIGEPROF, n.d.).

The National Women's Council is a branch of the MIGEPROF which is responsible for building women's capacity and ensuring their involvement in national development through advocacy and social mobilization. (National Women's Council, n.d.).

The Forum for Women Parliamentarians (FFRP) is a Rwandan forum that brings together female legislators who campaign for gender equality, women's rights, and women's empowerment.

Lastly, Rwanda's Gender Monitoring Office (GMO) is a governmental institution that monitors and promotes gender equality and the empowerment of women. It assesses policies, analyzes statistics, and campaigns for gender equality. The GMO works with stakeholders, offers capacity building, and strives for a more inclusive society.

Overall, since the post-genocide era, Rwanda has made major progress toward strengthening women's political representation and empowerment. Paul Kagame's

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the government has promoted gender equality via constitutional and legislative reforms, as well as by creating specific institutions and working with foreign partners and civil society organizations. The reform of the Constitution in 2003 came with the creation of a 30% quota for women in decision-making bodies. As a result, Rwanda boasts the highest percentage of female lawmakers in the world. Nevertheless, by implementing new gender-responsive regulations, efforts still have to be made in order to guarantee that this representation leads to actual consequences. The progress made in Rwanda is a powerful example of how gender equality has transformational potential in politics.

## **1.2. National Gender Policy**

There have been many important gender-responsive laws and policies created in Rwanda since the end of the genocide. Such legislation is essential for promoting gender equality; Thus, the National Gender Policy is one of the most powerful policies implemented until now.

The overall goal of this gender policy is to eliminate all forms of gender-based violence and discrimination, to increase gender equality and equity across a variety of sectors, and to increase women's access to economic opportunities (MIGEPROF, 2021, p. 06). In other words, what the government is aiming at with this policy is to achieve a progressive transformation of Rwanda into a country that promotes and embraces gender equality and consequently positions itself as a global model in achieving gender equality.

The National Gender Policy was first adopted by the Rwandan government in 2004. It is revised and updated regularly by three-year strategic implementation plans (Debusscher & Ansoms, 2013, p. 08-09). It was last revised in 2021, placing a particular focus on increasing gender mainstreaming in the private sector, which is the backbone of Rwanda's economy, and maximizing the involvement of men and boys in the process of achieving gender equality. (Ministry of Gender and Family Promotion, 2021, p.06).

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In the last Revised National Gender Policy Report, the Ministry of Gender and Family Promotion (MIGEPROF) clearly described the policy framework by structuring it into 8 priority areas along with its respective objectives (See Figure 3).

**Figure 3**

MIGEPROF’s Policy Framework.

<i>PRIORITY AREAS</i>		<i>POLICY OBJECTIVES</i>	
1	“Engendering national planning frameworks, sector policies, strategies as well as programs and initiatives in public and private sectors.”	1	“Strengthen the gender mainstreaming and accountability across national planning frameworks, sector policies and strategies in public and private sector.”
2	“Accelerate women’s economic empowerment”	2	“Ensure equal access and control of productive resources and economic opportunities for women and men, boys and girls.”
3	“Continue to promote gender equality and equity in education, health and social protection sectors”	3	Improve gender equality and equity in education, health and social protection”
4	“Leverage on positive cultural norms that support best practices for gender promotion.”	4	“Identify, map gender best practices and address persistent cultural norms, gender stereotypes, and imbalances affecting the principles of gender equality and equity between women and men and girls and boys.”
5	“Men’s and boys’ engagement in gender promotion”	5	“Ensure effective boys and men’s engagement programs and strategies in gender promotion”

6	“Increase women’s meaningful participation and representation in leadership and decision-making positions in public and private sector as well as CSOs at all levels”	6	“ <b>Strengthen</b> the mechanisms for promoting women’s meaningful participation in leadership and decision-making positions”
7	“Enhance gender specific capacity development”	7	“Increase knowledge on gender equality and equity in public and private sectors as well as among citizens in general”
8	“Conducive Legal Framework for Gender equality”	8	“Guarantee a conducive legal, policy, and institutional arrangement for the promotion of gender equality and equity.”

*Source: Self-elaboration. Elaboration based on (MIGEPROF, 2021, p. 32-33.)*

MIGEPROF developed the policy objectives mentioned in Figure 3 in accordance with several regional and international plans of action such as the 2030 Agenda, more specifically SDG 5, the African Union Gender Policy (2009)<sup>4</sup>, the East Africa Gender Policy<sup>5</sup>, and the African Union Agenda 2063<sup>6</sup>.

Altogether, Rwanda’s regularly revised National Gender Policy seems to be very important in the country’s fight against gender inequality. In alignment with international and regional agendas, the policy aims at promoting gender equality, increasing women’s empowerment, and eliminating all forms of gender-based violence. With such objectives, Rwanda’s government has the vision of becoming a global model for gender equality. Thus, by increasing the effectiveness of gender-responsive initiatives and gender mainstreaming and liability, the National

<sup>4</sup>[https://au.int/sites/default/files/documents/36195-doc-au\\_strategy\\_for\\_gender\\_equality\\_womens\\_empowerment\\_2018-2028\\_report.pdf](https://au.int/sites/default/files/documents/36195-doc-au_strategy_for_gender_equality_womens_empowerment_2018-2028_report.pdf)

<sup>5</sup><https://www.jamii.go.tz/uploads/publications/sw1542101555-EAC%20GENDER%20POLICY.pdf>

<sup>6</sup><https://au.int/en/agenda2063/overview>



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Gender Policy highlights Rwanda's determination towards achieving gender equality and justice.

### **1.3. Women's Economic Empowerment**

Rwanda's development program has placed a lot of emphasis on gender equality in its economic transition. The Rwandan government, along with various organizations, has made many efforts to encourage women's economic empowerment and assure their full involvement in the nation's economic transition. Rwanda counts on a solid legal and policy framework that promotes gender equality in its economic transition.

The National Women's Economic Empowerment Program, National Gender Policy, and National Gender Strategy are important programs aiming at reducing gender inequities, improving women's access to resources and markets, and encouraging female entrepreneurship.

Furthermore, the 2003 Constitution emphasizes, as well, the importance of women's participation in the economy. However, it was not the first legal framework that considered and included the importance of women's economic empowerment in Rwanda.

In 1999, the Inheritance law - Law/n° 22/99 of 12/11/1999 on Matrimonial Regimes, Liberalities, and Successions<sup>7</sup> - was passed, giving women and girls the right to family property (Kelsey et al., 2015, p. 03). This law made a substantial contribution to the advancement of women's economic empowerment in Rwanda since it was formerly restricted to men. Before it was passed, the Inheritance Law in Rwanda was discriminatory towards women, restricting their access to land, property, and other assets. However, this legislation has made it possible for women to participate more actively in the countries' economy, engage in business, and acquire wealth by removing discriminatory practices and giving women access to

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<sup>7</sup>LAW N° 22/99 OF 12/11/1999. (Rwanda, 1999). Law to supplement book one of the civil code and to institute part five regarding matrimonial regimes, liberalities, and successions. Available at: <https://repositories.lib.utexas.edu/bitstream/handle/2152/5448/2740.pdf>

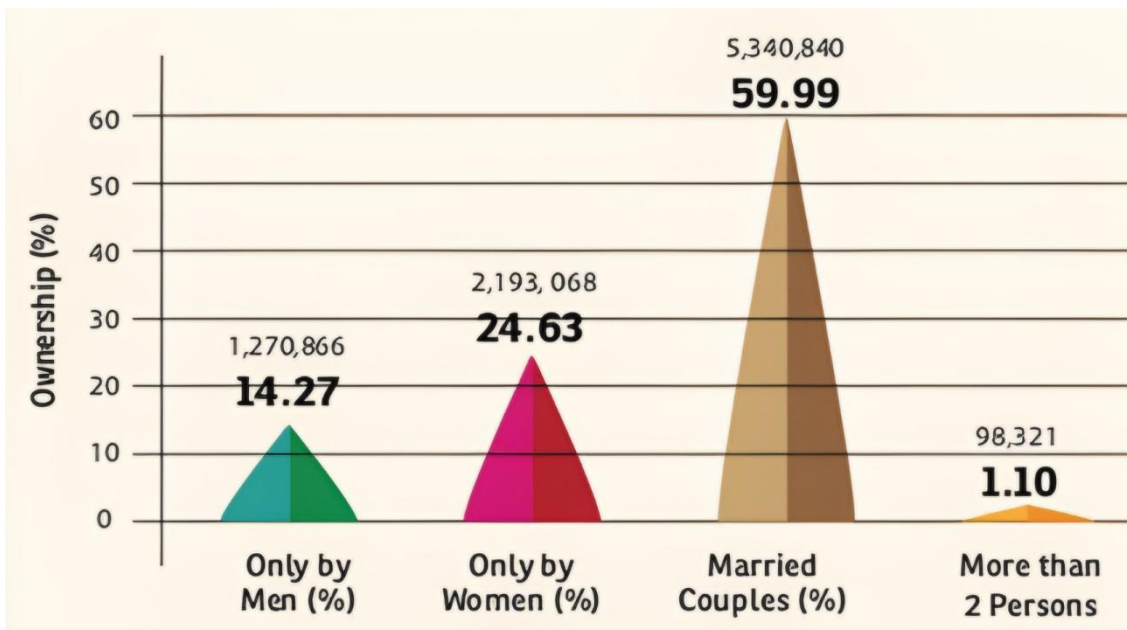
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property and inherited assets (Freeman, 2016). Consequently, women's participation in different sectors of economic and cultural life has expanded since 1999.

Women play an essential role in Rwanda's agriculture, providing food for both their households and the market. Therefore, access to land is very important for Rwandan women. Due to the implementation of the 1999 Inheritance Law women gained access to land, which is the primary source for production and investment. Subsequently, women's access to land significantly enhanced their control over productive resources and access to loans, which are usually secured by land titles (Gender Monitoring Office, 2019). The Land Law has been revised over time, and in June 2013 a new land legislation - Law N° 43/2013<sup>8</sup> - was passed to replace the 1999 Inheritance Law.

**Figure 4**

Land Ownership



Source: Gender Monitoring Office (2019).

As can be seen in Figure 3, the data collected in 2019 shows how women have a higher percentage of land ownership (24.63 %) than men (14.27 %). Additionally,

<sup>8</sup>LAW N° 43/2013 of 16/06/2013. (Rwanda, 2013). Governing Land in Rwanda. Available at: [https://gmo.gov.rw/fileadmin/user\\_upload/laws%20and%20policies/Law\\_N\\_\\_\\_\\_\\_43-2013\\_of\\_16-06-2013\\_governing\\_land\\_in\\_Rwanda.pdf](https://gmo.gov.rw/fileadmin/user_upload/laws%20and%20policies/Law_N_____43-2013_of_16-06-2013_governing_land_in_Rwanda.pdf)

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the Rwandan government has worked with numerous organizations in order to create awareness of the land law and educate the public about women's land rights. These numbers and facts show the major improvement that has been made since the previous era when women had no rights over the land. By obtaining their right to own and control land, these developments have had a profoundly transforming effect on women's lives in Rwanda. As a result, they are now more economically empowered, have better livelihoods, and have more influence over community decisions. Overall, to empower women to actively participate in economic development, access to land is essential. (Government of the Republic Rwanda, 2019).

Moreover, the situation of women's employment and labor has also improved throughout the years due to several gender-responsive strategies, policies, and laws implemented by Kagame's government.

On one hand, Article 30 - Right to free choice of employment - of the 2003 Rwandan Constitution, revised in 2015, guarantees and states that "All individuals, without any form of discrimination, have the right to equal pay for equal work" (Constitute Project, 2022, p. 10). On the other hand, Law N° 13/2009 of 27/05/2009<sup>9</sup>, which was replaced by Law N° 66/2018 of 30/08/2018<sup>10</sup> encompassing several changes, regulates labor in Rwanda. Overall, this law has a special focus on gender equality by aiming at promoting equal opportunities for all workers and eliminate all forms of violence, harassment, and discrimination against women (Rwabuhiri, 2013, p. 03). Women are granted equal pay and twelve weeks of fully paid maternity leave. Due to these gender-responsive policies and legal frameworks since 2000, women in Rwanda hold a higher employment rate than men (National Institute of Statistics of Rwanda, n.d).

Traditionally, Rwandan women are more likely to be financially excluded. However, throughout the last two decades, the government has prioritized strengthening women's financial inclusion. In collaboration with financial institutions

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<sup>9</sup>LAW N° 13/2009 of 27/05/2009. (Rwanda, 2009). Law regulating labor in Rwanda. Available at: <https://www.ilo.org/dyn/travail/docs/514/NEW%20LABOUR%20LAW%20N13.2009%20OF%2027.5.2009.pdf>

<sup>10</sup>LAW N° 66/2018 of 30/08/2018. (Rwanda, 2018). Law regulating labour in Rwanda. Available at: [https://www.gmo.gov.rw/fileadmin/user\\_upload/laws%20and%20policies/New\\_Labour\\_Law\\_2018.pdf](https://www.gmo.gov.rw/fileadmin/user_upload/laws%20and%20policies/New_Labour_Law_2018.pdf)

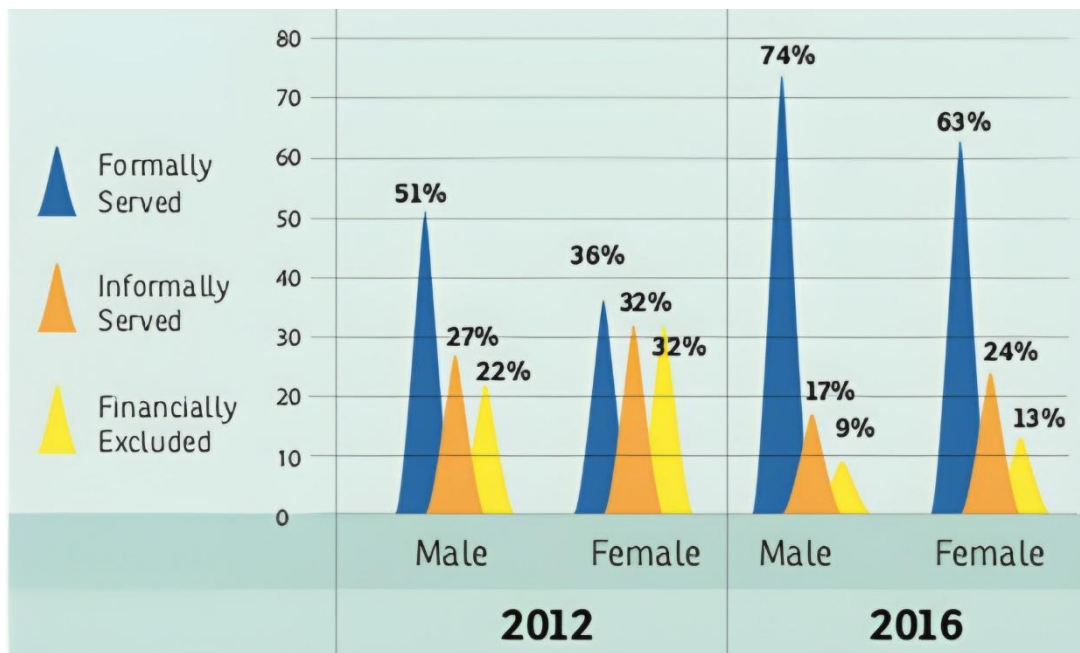
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and other partners, they have made many efforts in eliminating financial barriers among women giving them the right to have access to financial services, such as savings accounts and loans.

One of these efforts made by the MIGEPROF is the creation of The Youth and Women Access to Finance Strategy in 2012, which aims at helping women and the youth by offering assistance with financial services such as credits and by offering training to increase their financial literacy. Subsequently, to encourage women and the youth to access development funding, a guarantee fund was created. It is administered by the Business Development Fund (BDF) and offers up to 75% of a loan guarantee. (MIGEPROF, 2016, p. 01).

**Figure 5**

Women’s progress in access to finance



Source: Gender Monitoring Office (2019)

Women’s progress in access to finance can be observed in Figure 4, as the female percentage of financial exclusion decreased from 32% in 2012 to 13% in 2016. In addition, women’s access to formal financial services increased from 36% in 2012 to 63% in 2016. However, men still have more access to formal financial

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services. In Rwanda, women traditionally have had more access to informal financial services - which include transactions that are not regulated by government regulations, such as gifts and loans from relatives, friends, and neighbors - due to gender discriminative reasons (Gender Monitoring Office, 2019). However, in Figure 4, it is also observed that the percentage of women accessing informal groups of finance decreased from 32% in 2012 to 24% in 2016. Overall, a substantial improvement in the financial inclusion of Rwandan women can be observed.

## **2. Challenges and Setbacks**

Despite the remarkable achievements Rwanda has made working with social organizations and international partners, in pursuing the goals outlined in SDG 5, significant challenges and setbacks remain in achieving gender equality.

### **2.1. Economic Disparities**

Rwanda faces many economic disparities between the sexes. Rwandan women face barriers to accessing economic prosperity and financial resources, as their entrepreneurship and economic empowerment are hindered by limited access to land, financial services, and employment opportunities.

Despite the implementation of several land laws and policies, many women are still excluded from land inheritance and/or ownership mainly due to socio-cultural barriers (Strube, 2021), which can be traced back to the behavior of the population of Rwanda. Polavarapu (2011) states three different types of social obstacles: the population's resistance to equal inheritance rights among daughters and sons, beliefs that women are inferior, and the persistence of informal marriages. The author argues that these barriers will continue to significantly affect women's rights to the inheritance and ownership of land simply because key actors such as advocates, development actors, and other policy-makers fail to address the deep and underlying causes. Therefore, most of the policy solutions proposed by them are inadequate. (Polavarapu, 2011, p. 26).

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Giving women the right to economic resources is essential in order to achieve SDG 5.a, which instructs governments to “Undertake reforms to give women equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to ownership and control over land and other forms of property, financial services, inheritance, and natural resources, in accordance with national laws.” (UN, n.d.-c). Overall, women's limited access to land is one of the main factors which hinder their economic opportunities and their ability to save their families from poverty. Therefore, as many experts suggest, it is essential to solve this problem by addressing the deep-rooted causes, such as the cultural and social norms of Rwanda’s society.

The agriculture sector plays an essential role in the economy of Rwanda, as it employs 67.6% of the population, of which 79.1% are women. Therefore, it is remarkable that women contribute significantly to this crucial sector. (Pro-Femmes/Twese Hamwe, 2018). However, women also suffer from limited access to financial institutions in agricultural services. Despite the government's strategies mentioned earlier, the situation of financial discrimination persists. According to the organization Pro-Femmes (2018), the agricultural sector is in the hand of poor women (86%) with low levels of schooling and high rates of illiteracy (23.3%). This leads to women remaining in subsistence agriculture. Because of this, women's capacity to participate in the agriculture business decreases, giving them very low chances to access financial services in agriculture. Overall, MIGEPROF identified several challenges to women’s access to agricultural finance that need to be addressed. These are: “limited access to formal financial services, limited collaterals, limited financial literacy, limited availability of financial products and services tailored to women and youth needs, the persistence of negative mindsets and beliefs that hinder women and youth access to finance, limited access to relevant information, limited entrepreneurial skills and capacity to innovate among the women and youth, Limited penetration of the insurance services in the country especially in rural areas as well as inadequate coordination of different initiatives that promote women and youth access to finance” (MIGEPROF, 2016, p. 13). However, just like the discrimination of women towards having access to land rights, the issue regarding women’s low access to financial services in Rwanda is limited solely by sociocultural barriers. Therefore, the traditional social and cultural standards that are

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part of Rwanda's patriarchal society must be tackled in a comprehensive manner in order to deal with them effectively (Pro-Femmes/Twese Hamwe, 2018).

Besides the gender-responsive framework implemented to improve the situation of women's employment, the overall labor force participation remains lower for women. According to The World Bank, the percentage of the female labor force in Rwanda in 2022 was 46%. This percentage has slightly decreased since 2020 when it was 46,4%. However, female labor force participation reached its lowest point since 2000 during 2019, with 45.8%, which might be traced back to the covid pandemic. (The World Bank, 2022). Although the laws and strategies implemented by the Rwandan government have led to an increase in the percentage of women in the labor market, male dominance continues to exist in this sector. The GMO argues that men dominate the labor market because they have access to sufficient resources and have the relevant skills to engage in productive employment, unlike women. Rwandan women are not only less likely than men to find a job, but they are also frequently discriminated against when it comes to occupying certain high-level positions. One of the main factors can be found within Rwanda's social standards. Rwandan society considers men to be more educated and more suitable for positions of greater responsibility and leadership in the workplace. (GMO, 2019, p. 21). As in many other countries, society in Rwanda assumes that women must first attend the social responsibilities, such as the household and raising children, assuming that they have limited time and therefore it would not be possible for them to fulfill high-level positions. Hence, it's essential for the government to address this issue accurately.

In brief, Rwandan women face many economic inequalities. Women's economic empowerment is hampered by limited access to land, financial services, and employment possibilities. These challenges are exacerbated mainly by socio-cultural barriers. However, experts say that in order to solve these issues, it is critical to address the underlying causes, such as the social norms, and to promote gender-responsive frameworks, as well as to give women equal access to financial services and employment opportunities.

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## 2.2. Obstacles in Women’s Political Representation & Participation

As mentioned earlier, due to the 30% quota implemented by the government in the 2003 Constitution, Rwanda is today the country with the highest representation of women in the national parliament. Since in the post-genocide era Rwanda's population became majority women, President Kagame decided to make them have a more active role in the country’s decision-making process. According to UN Women, as of 2023, women make up 66.7% of Rwanda’s cabinet of ministers (UN Women et.al., 2023). Nevertheless, the full and equal participation of women in politics continues to be restricted by multiple challenges. Most women continue to face economic hardship and gender gaps, which can be seen as an indicator that increased female representation in the political sphere does not necessarily mean that women's rights are prioritized and guaranteed (Burnet, 2019).

Due to Rwanda's patriarchal society, women are not viewed as active participants in decision-making processes, which leads to gender inequality in both political and social relations. Most Rwandan women and men are still influenced by many traditional customs and beliefs which promote the idea of women’s subordination to men. This idea of inferiority leads women to believe that they are the ones who are responsible of household tasks and other social responsibilities, such as caring for children, while men are the ones in charge of working and providing income for the family. Therefore, men tend to reject the idea of women occupying leadership positions, challenging the improvement of women’s situation in Rwanda.

Uwineza & Pearson (2009) mention the following quote from an expert: “Such social requirements do exert an extra burden on an educated, progressive woman who has to fulfill both the work-related demands plus the family and social demands. It does not matter if she is a cabinet minister, an office worker or a village housewife, their family roles still remain the same.”. Since the increase of women's representation in the Rwandan political sphere, several socio-cultural obstacles are faced by women who are now occupying a seat in state decision-making bodies and other leadership positions. Now, they are not only expected to be responsible for household chores, but they must also fulfill their obligations to the nation as



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politicians. This situation is a factor that frequently affects the duration of women in political careers. The double responsibility and workload both at home and at work, causes female politicians to feel stressed and overwhelmed in their leadership position, often ending up in burnout. (Castillejo, 2018, p. 29-34). However, in many cases, this situation can even lead much further to the point of experiencing violence against them. Men often have the feeling of inferiority and failure, when their wives are successful politicians. “This superiority or inferiority complex can lead to tensions and even violence in the family as women advance in public or corporate life.” (Uwineza & Pearson, 2009, p.22). Overall, progress in increasing women's representation in Rwandan politics has focused exclusively on achieving women's role as public figures, neglecting the need to address the traditionally imposed role of women as holders of social and domestic responsibilities.

For the most part, the situations mentioned above are more frequent in the rural areas of Rwanda. Female political representation is much lower in local governments than at the national level (Castillejo, 2018, p. 29-34). One of the main factors for this is women's and girls' lack of literacy and access to education in the rural areas of Rwanda. In urban areas, 54% of women have completed primary education and 80% are literate. However, in rural areas, only 28% of women have completed primary education, and only 54% are literate. Therefore, the level of education and literacy for women in rural areas is much lower than in urban areas. (Abbott & Malunda, 2016). This has a major impact on Rwanda's female political representation as education is crucial in achieving leadership positions. (Uwineza & Pearson, 2009). Since girls and women have limited access to education, they are less informed and have little or no knowledge about public leadership positions, which may explain why the number of female candidates is lower among the local governments.

Another important obstacle is the exclusiveness of elite women in political participation. Most female councilors in Rwanda come from “the elite group of Huye District (middle class, influence in politics, well-known).” (Bayisenge, 2018). This shows how the quota system provides only a few benefits for poor women. Thus, the political system is set to benefit well-educated, and well-connected elites. These elite

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women are usually closely related to the RPF party, which adds another advantage to their easy access to leadership positions in the government. Because of this, the RPF party has a certain control over these women, so then female representatives may not end up focusing so much on perusing Rwandan women's general interests and rights, but rather on the RPF's own political interests. Bayisenge (2018) states that "the system does not recognize the real heterogeneity of Rwandan women. Rather, it takes elite women as legitimate representatives of all women."

To conclude, despite Rwanda's progress towards an improvement of women's political representation and participation, a pro-elite political system and patriarchal traditions such as women's roles and limited access to education are barriers that remain hampering the achievement of gender equality in the country.

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## V. DISCUSSION

The key conclusions that resulted from the previous research will be presented and discussed in the following section. Based on the research findings, the extent to which increased female political participation and gender-inclusive policymaking effectively address deeply entrenched gender norms, structures, and practices in Rwandan society will be discussed.

### 1. Analysis of the Effectiveness of Rwanda's Women's Empowerment Policies and Strategies.

The study on Rwanda's policies and strategies for empowering women has resulted in several key findings. Overall, the gender situation has changed tremendously since the arrival of President Paul Kagame and the RPF in the government of Rwanda after the 1994 genocide. Several improvements have been made regarding gender equality, especially in the political and economic sectors. Yet, there are many challenges remaining.

Regarding the main achievements, there are many new strategies and legal and policy frameworks that were implemented in Rwanda with the aim of making progress in gender equality and women's empowerment. However, due to limited extension reasons, the research is only focused on the three main achievements.

Firstly, women's political representation and participation has increased greatly. The main findings show that Rwanda's government, together with women's organizations and activists, has made significant progress towards promoting gender equality and women's rights with the 2003 Constitutional Reform, revised in 2015. This reform introduced a whole range of changes. Undoubtedly, the best known is the implementation of the 30% quota, which states that Rwandan women must occupy at least 30% of the seats in decision-making bodies both at national and local levels. This achievement has enabled Rwanda to become first in the ranking of countries with the highest representation of women in a national parliament, with 61% of seats occupied by women in 2018 (GMO, 2019). Consequently, many institutions, such as MIGEPROF, the GMO, the FFRP, and the NWC, were established for promoting gender equality and women's empowerment.

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Secondly, the implementation of the regularly revised National Gender Policy was a main achievement as well. This policy aimed at achieving gender equality and justice by increasing the effectiveness of gender-responsive initiatives and gender mainstreaming.

Finally, Rwanda has made significant progress toward women's economic empowerment. MIGEPROF has implemented several policies that aim at reducing gender inequalities by improving women's economic development. New laws were also created in order to regulate and improve women's access to land, financial resources, employment, and labor. The 1999 Inheritance Law gave women and girls the right to inherit family property and land, which was traditionally restricted to men. Furthermore, Article 30 of the 2003 Constitution and Law N° 66/2018 of 30/08/2018, were implemented to regulate labour. On the one hand, the wage gap was determined by Art. 30 of the 2003 Constitution, revised in 2015, by assuring equal pay between men and women. On the other hand, the 2009 Labour Law, revised in 2018, aimed at promoting equal opportunities for all workers and eliminating GBV at work. Thus, women in Rwanda have traditionally been financially excluded. In 2012 MIGEPROF created the Youth and Women Access to Finance Strategy for granting Rwandan women access to financial services, such as loans or saving accounts. Consequently, the percentage of women that were financially excluded decreased by 19% from 2012 to 2016 (GMO, 2019).

Moreover, several challenges and setbacks persist, especially regarding Rwandan women's political and economic empowerment. Traditional norms and values persist in Rwanda's patriarchal society, making it very difficult to achieve progress in gender equality matters. These norms and customs have become socio-cultural barriers that greatly affect the economic and political development of women in Rwanda.

Even though measures have been implemented to achieve women's fundamental right to have independent economic development since the end of the genocide, Rwanda has not been able to change the cruel reality Rwandan women face on a daily basis. There are three main socio-cultural obstacles to the right to land inheritance: the resistance of the population to obtain equal inheritance

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regardless of whether you are a man or a woman, son or daughter; the thought that women should be subordinate to men; and the persistence of illegal marriages, as it prevents women from accessing the social, legal and economic benefits of marriage (Polavarapu, 2011). As women represent a high percentage of agriculturally employed people in Rwanda, it is essential for them to have access to agricultural finance services. However, women remain in subsistence agriculture as most women that work in this sector are poor and have limited access to financial resources (Pro-Femmes/Twese Hamwe, 2018). This situation as well can be mainly attributed to socio-cultural barriers that women face, such as limited access to economic resources, the negative beliefs that women are inferior, limited access to education and literacy, restricted access to formal financial services, etc. (MIGEPROF, 2016).

Additionally, social standards affect women's employment rates significantly. According to The World Bank (2018), the overall labor force participation remains lower for women. This shows how, although the percentage of female workers increased since the implementation of the labor laws, men still dominate the workforce, especially when talking about high-level positions.

Many obstacles can also be found in Rwandan women's political representation and participation. Although women's political representation has increased in Rwanda since the establishment of the quota system, gender inequality persists in Rwanda's socio-political relations due to the norms of the patriarchal Rwandan society. In Rwanda, there is a stereotype of women based on inferiority and subordination. Rwandan society is dominated by the belief that women should mainly be in charge of domestic chores, such as cleaning the house and taking care of the children. This is why men do not look favorably at a woman who wants to take a leadership position, especially in the political sphere. They have internalized the idea that women do not have the necessary skills to take on such positions, which makes it more difficult for women to enter politics. Since women's representation in state decision-making bodies has increased, women leaders now have a double responsibility. Due to socio-cultural reasons, even if they have another job, they are still expected to take care of social and domestic responsibilities. This often causes

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women to feel stressed and, therefore, to resign from their leadership positions. (Uwineza & Pearson, 2009).

However, the situation is even more challenging at the local level. Research finds that the political representation of women in rural areas is much lower (Castillejo, 2018, p. 29-34). This gap results from the lack of education and literacy among women in local communities, as education is essential for women to take part in political processes (Uwineza & Pearson, 2009).

Another main finding is the exclusiveness of elite women to access politics. Although female political representation has increased since 1994, only elite women had access to these leadership positions. Most female representatives are wealthy and well-educated elite women that are closely related to the RPF party. This can lead to the issue that these female representatives may not represent the interests of Rwandan women in general but the interests of the RPF political party. (Bayisenge (2018).

Although the government has implemented significant policies, laws, and strategies to achieve SDG 5, such efforts might not be sufficient to effectively solve the problems that women are confronted with in Rwanda.

It is necessary to recognize that the government of Rwanda has done an overall good job in fulfilling SDG 5 target 5.C which requires states to “Adopt and strengthen policies and enforceable legislation for gender equality.” (United Nations, n.d.). However, the population of Rwanda persists as a patriarchal society, with social norms and customs which are discriminative towards women and girls. Therefore, it is important to consider to which extent the implemented gender policies and strategies can work effectively in a patriarchal society.

According to Wallace (2008), “Rwanda is a good test case for political congruence theory since the political institutions are more egalitarian than the political culture of many of the population.”. The political congruence theory states that the institutional framework should be aligned with the population's views on politics. In the case of Rwanda and according to this theory, for policies to be effective, there must be an agreement between the desires of the society and the

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policies that the government has put in place. However, this is not the case. Traditional social standards and gender stereotypes are still alive within the Rwandan culture despite the government's and other political institutions' ongoing efforts to advance gender equality and women's empowerment. Such discriminative beliefs and cultural norms are most likely to be the main obstacles in achieving effective implementation of gender equality policies.

Many Rwandan women still have limited access to land, financial resources, employment, and labor due to the outlined socio-cultural constraints that are deeply ingrained in the society of Rwanda (Burnet, 2019). However, the efforts by the government to address these issues cannot be fully effective due to the lack of support by the Rwandan population itself. The same happens with the presence of women in high positions in politics and businesses since the position of leadership among women is not well seen or accepted by many Rwandans. Overall, the successful implementation of gender-responsive policies or strategies by the government can be disrupted if most of the population, including women, is unwilling to support or accept the notions of gender equality.

The research questions explore to which extent Rwanda's gender policies are contributing to gender equality as defined under SDG 5 and if increased female political participation and gender-inclusive policymaking can address Rwanda's deeply ingrained societal gender norms, structures, and practices effectively. Given the findings and evaluation, it is possible to draw the conclusion that, although these initiatives are important milestones in the direction of achieving SDG 5, they may not be enough on their own. Achieving gender equality in Rwanda will require more extensive societal changes than simply increasing female political engagement and gender-inclusive legislation. Rwanda can build a more inclusive and equitable society for all its residents by confronting deeply rooted gender customs, structures, and behaviors.

To conclude, despite the efforts of the government of the Republic of Rwanda in progressing towards achieving gender equality, the difficulties faced by deeply rooted gender norms and behaviors are very difficult to overcome. In order to achieve successful gender-responsive policies and increase female political engagement, the

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general population's support and acceptance of gender equality is essential. Therefore, it is necessary to tackle deeply ingrained customs, structures, and behaviors that are discriminative against women and girls in Rwanda.



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## **VI. CONCLUSION**

The analysis of Rwanda's feminist policies points to both significant achievements and persisting socio-cultural problems in achieving the SDG 5 of gender equality. Following the cruel genocide in Rwanda in 1994, the transitional government led by Paul Kagame and his political party RPF decided to introduce gender equality in its legal and policy framework. Consequently, Rwanda began its path to achieving gender equality.

Progress was made in the aftermath of the genocide, especially in the achievement of increasing female political participation and representation. The 2003 constitutional reform was a key player, as it implemented the 30% quota and the creation of many institutions working for women's rights. This practice paved the way for women's participation in Rwanda's decision-making bodies, making it possible for Rwanda to rank number one among the countries with the highest representation of women in parliament in 2022. Additionally, the National Gender Policy is one of the most important policies created as well to promote gender equality in Rwanda, addressing issues concerning GVB and education as well. Furthermore, women's economic empowerment also seemed to be a priority on the government's agenda. The 1999 Inheritance Law, 2009 Labour Law, and the Youth and Women Access to Finance Strategy were implemented to address women's lack of access to land, financial services, and equal opportunities in labor.

Despite these accomplishments, several difficulties remain. Gender equality still faces barriers from long-established societal standards, patriarchal attitudes, and prejudices regarding gender. These barriers, such as views of women's subordination, restricted access to education and resources, and the assumption that women prioritize domestic chores, limit women's political engagement and economic growth.

Overall, these findings demonstrate that, although the implementation of gender policy in Rwanda has achieved international recognition, sexist social roots persist among the Rwandan population. The effectiveness of the actions and efforts

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made by Rwandan government institutions on gender issues is hampered mainly by the cultural background with discriminatory effects on women.

The government made significant progress towards gender equality in Rwanda by implementing a gender-policy framework and therefore fulfilling target 5.C. of SDG 5. However, the actions established in Rwanda cannot be fully effective if the root causes are not addressed in firsthand. These causes are the outcome of the social structure of Rwanda's society, which has traditionally been a patriarchal society, seeing women as inferior to men.

Political congruence is necessary for Rwanda to achieve gender equality. To achieve fully effective implementation of gender-responsive policies and strategies, it is essential that both the decision-making bodies and the population have the same view over gender equality and women's empowerment within society. Thus, as long as the situation remains that way, inequality will continue to persist in Rwanda.

To conclude, regardless of Rwanda's progress in achieving SDG 5 since 1994, significant challenges are yet to be solved. Building a more inclusive and fair society for all Rwandan citizens will require addressing deeply rooted gender standards and practices. For Rwanda to achieve gender equality, it is essential to involve extensive cultural changes that go beyond laws and political representation, such as social transformation.

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