

## **CHAPTER-V**

### **Conclusion**

Rwandan women have done miracle for Rwanda. They have given new life to Rwandans. They have successfully beaten the negative effects and impacts of ethnicity. No doubt the Rwandan ethnicity has played an important role in the Rwandan history but women had tried hard to negate the impact of ethnicity on future generation. Rwandan ethnicity may be known or recognized as Primordialist, Epiphenomenalist, Ascriptive, Instrumentalist, or Constructive from time to time, but now Rwandan women has given new status, new name and new recognition to Rwandan society which is far away from ethnic influence. New Rwandan society is inclusive of commitment, progress and development and exclusive from instability, fear, hatred, and violence. Now the changed nature of ethnicity lies in the features of goodness, commitment and reciprocity. Rwandan women have upheld the dignity of all individuals. They have opened the door of affiliations and commitments for peace, progress and prosperity. Ethnic conflict has eroded the concept of humanity. Brutal killing, displacement, loss of citizenship, identity based questions, political manipulation and violence suddenly became relevant in the history of Rwanda. Rwandan population had faced demographic, political, economic, social and psychological consequences. But the gender-based-violence, sexual assault have raised the question mark on human rights, security and dignity respect of women. All these issues put the double burden on women's responsibilities and expectations. Rwanda had become a place of walking dead bodies, wounded people and psychologically dead souls. Till now women are physically, medically, mentally and psychologically facing the burden of the tragedy of genocide. In present day Rwanda, women took different revolutionary initiatives for betterment of the society. They are nurturing Rwandan society through different projects like counseling sessions, therapy exercise for mental relaxation, treating HIV/AIDS patients, more focus on social reconstruction and reconciliation efforts through Authenticity projects. They are also giving moral education, emotional self awareness. Now Rwandan women are participating in different umbrella organization, civil society organization, for women,

children, old age people and disabled people. They are the part of major reforms programmes like legal rights, educational rights, reconciliation & peace, security issues. Rwanda is known for its appreciable feminism in contemporary era. By projecting the role of women in politics, economy, infrastructure, education in all the spheres of administration, the present day Rwanda appears to have embarked on creating history. Rwanda represents a very unique case for all feminist theories. In Rwandan feminist context it will be more accurate to argue not in terms of a monolith but rather in the context of a pluralism (African feminism) that captures the fluidity and dynamism of the different cultural imperatives, historical forces, and local context conditioning women's activism/ movements in Africa-Such resistance and disagreements contribute to defining and explaining Rwandan feminism. However, what is crucial to note is how the definitions and explanations are contextualized. To meaningfully explain Rwandan feminism, it is not to the western but rather to the African environment that one must refer to. Rwandan feminism is not reactive; it is proactive. It has a life of its own that is rooted in the Rwandan environment. Its uniqueness emanates from the Rwandan cultural and philosophical specificity. Rwandan feminism's cannot be grasped by drawing on the western feminism instead; they should be investigated in the context of their place and importance in the Rwandan environment. We found that different feminist theories like Liberal Feminism, Third wave Feminism, Post- Colonial Feminism, Difference Feminism, Cultural Feminism are relevant from time to time in context to Rwandan feminism. Rwandan feminism has given different interpretations and women have shown the different contextualized meaning of feminism from time to time. So in summary we can say that Rwandan feminism is great in its own sense which gives real meaning to the Rwandan women's existence of their identity. Present day Rwandan women are strong, united, well developed, well connected and empowered. Earlier women were never the part of polices, but presently they are not only the part of the policies, but they are framing the policies themselves and are functional part of the mainstream polices. Rwandan Feminism is about woman's activism, commitment, self believe, so that women can achieve equality, justice and liberty for herself. Woman can be able to analyze, describe and judged her own self and individuality in a society. Rwandan women today are known by the qualities like balance, connectedness, reciprocity,

compromise, Rwandan feminism sees power as negotiable and negotiated; it assesses power not in absolute but in relative terms- in terms of power-sharing and complementing, accommodation, compromise, negotiation, and inclusiveness. These are the characteristics and important features of Rwandan women. After the facing the 1994 genocide tragedy Rwandan women came out of trauma & tragedy and create opportunity for societal reorganization, new and amended political philosophies and avenues for socioeconomic growth and capacity building. Women in Rwanda are now well- connected, more confident, in more cosmopolitan outlook, more progressive, representing themselves at the highest number in world political stage and ready for the huge transformation. The main important aspects of politics of women in Rwanda is that Rwanda is a country which is based on ethnic lines, but at the same time country favor's the women representation at the highest number in the world. Women are supporting every aspect of life from top to bottom, from cab-drivers to scientist, doctors, engineers, brick makers and so on. Economically women are running umbrella organizations, NGOs, old and widow groups. Women had responded well in non-traditional, non-formal, unskilled responsibilities as well as they are also performing excellent in modern world technical policy analyst and skilled –labour work too. Rwandan women have introduced modification according to their needs and culture. They have introduced changes in different property & inheritance laws, right to reproduce, girl child education and so on. They have taken initiatives for national unity and reconciliation commission, various advocacy groups, civil society, initiative for peace & security, grassroot level organizations, prioritizing for psychological support for trauma centers and sustainable development. Rwandan women support in health sector is endless. Rwandan women have participated in different health projects like WE-ACTX, task shifting, safe-birth Africa initiative through access program, ICAP in Rwanda, association of the widows of the genocide of april (AVEGA), the Sager Family Foundation and in various HIV/AIDS prevention programs also. Political activism and participation through civil society organization have given new meaning, dynamism and shape edge to Rwandan women who demanded progressive laws, decentralization and political reform at the larger level. Few important organizations like, human rights groups, Duterembzere- a women's legal credit association , Haguruka- a women's legal and society& Reseau Des Femmes- a

network of women's development group are working for political stability and sustainable development. Women civil society in Rwanda also running a project called Strengthening New Communities (SNC) for improving the economic and social viability of new community in Rwanda .This project supports and encourages the participation of women as decision –makers and manages the community projects and income generation activities. The civil society also promotes PADDEP (for administration, population and economic development) and small school projects for basic education for girls. On the basis of progressive observation, we consider Rwandan women as the creator of the Rwandan economy. These days they are hold important high positions like board of directors in the company, micro- insurance officers, emerging leaders, strategic partners, technologist, scientist, bankers, agriculturalist, business executives etc. Women brought prosperity and economic stability in Rwanda. Women are associated with different economic projects like orphan's bee-keeping and honey farm project, Gold Sachs entrepreneurship certificate program,micro-finance schemes, basket weaving, promoting opportunities for women's empowerment in Rwanda (POWER),Urunana pineapple plantation project, Wirira widows's corn grinder and sales shop project, income generation project, sustainable access to financial services for investment (SAFI) etc. Now a days they are the representators of different projects and business proposals and society organization like world Entrepreneur society (WES) which is an active community of entrepreneurship in east Africa. Rwandan women also started participating in different international conferences- "Role of Leadership in promoting Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in 2010". Women in Rwanda are promoting holistic development through financial independence and right awareness. Even United Nations have initiated many projects like prevention of gender based violence, restoration of peace and security, UNDP Trust Fund etc for supporting women in Rwanda. Rwandan women achieved the unbelievable success in limited time period, in various fields and their role in upliftment of the post-genocide society has been remarkable.

## **Problems & challenges**

There are number of critical barriers to the empowerment of women in Rwanda, including customary practice that denies women and girls basic human rights and defines women by their relationships to and with men. Many traditional practices in Rwanda are not compatible with the constitutional guarantee of the equality between women and men, or international human rights law prohibiting discrimination against women. Practices such as violence by the community and by male partners against women and sexual harassment of women with impunity, as well as a lack of rights to control assets or inherit land, deny women's humanity, increase women's poverty, and hurt the economic and political development of the entire country. The magnitude of the problem is due to ,on one hand to low technical and resource capacity, logistical barriers between rural and urban areas, uncoordinated responses, shortages of information and on the other hand multiple socio-cultural and socio-economic issues. The impact of the GBI remained insignificant. The main challenge remains lack of gender analysis skills among the planners and other senior staff of different institutions; and to some extent lack of sufficient support from institutions where gender is still regarded as an additional issue, and not a priority. Politically, still women in Rwanda are facing some Political problems like discriminatory legal provisions may lead to confrontation between men and women due to perception of gender biased in Rwandan society. The major factors against women empowerment and gender equality are gender based violence, high illiteracy rate; conservative patriarchal society structure, discriminatory laws, poverty and lack of respect for women and misunderstanding of gender roles create an environment of mistrust within the family. After genocide, the government has made special provision for women to be the part of political and public sector, despite the fact that constitution is not explicit in the regard for any affirmative action or quotas favoring women in Rwanda. At the Judicial level, the problems facing Rwanda, eighteen years after the genocide, are daunting. The high number of widows and orphans, women whose husbands have been in jail for ten years, are still suffering. In spite of Constitutional guarantees, the justice sector (judges, magistrates, intermediate and grassroots level judicial sector workers, law enforcement, and prosecutors) has not been adequately

educated about changes in the laws to protect women's rights, or about how to achieve gender equality in practice. But unfortunately it has failed to attract widespread participation from Rwandan. In traditional Rwandan culture, women were not allowed to speak in public, so now it is difficult for women to speak with themselves. The personnel are not well-trained to deal sensitively with rape victims. Because both of these processes are difficult and traumatizing, and the stigma of rape is so great, most victims of sexual violence do not bring charges of rape in Gacaca (or in the formal court system), which means the many rapes that occurred go unacknowledged and unpunished. Witnesses are afraid to come forward, because an unknown number of them have been threatened, harassed, and murdered to keep them from giving evidence in Gacaca hearings. The possibility that thousands of confessed criminals will never be brought to justice for their crimes undermines the legitimacy of Gacaca. Even worse, the government estimates that up to one million participants in the genocide, people who murdered, tortured and raped, have not confessed and are not in custody. They are freely living and working in Rwandan society, thwarting not just Gacaca, but the promise and hope of justice for the many surviving victims of the genocide. At the economic level, Rwandan women are living under the hunger, poverty and economic crisis. Rwandan women are facing major challenges due to the problem of non involvement of large-scale business. They are involved in small-scale, non-technical informal business which is not register formally. An informal survey found that Rwandan women were less likely to register their business for tax purposes; 22.3 per cent of businesses represented by women declared their businesses compared to 27.6 per cent of businesses represented by men. Data also indicates that women's share of business ownership decreases as the degree of formalization increases. The women laborers are also facing discriminatory practices of less paid as compared to their counterparts and were given priority in the hiring process. The pregnant and breast-feeding women are also not given the facilities of good working conditions as well as they are facing discrimination in this regard. They do not have easy access and control of financial resources. The illiteracy is one another major hurdles of economic underdevelopment of Rwandan women. The persistence of the threat posed by gender based violence affecting women and young girls. Limited capacity arising from high illiteracy rates and low levels of education is still a major

hindrance. In some areas of governance it is difficult to find women candidates with the appropriate academic qualifications. Negative gender stereotypes persist, as well as stubborn resistance in some quarters to abandoning Rwanda's historically entrenched patriarchal structure. Some Rwandan men, particularly in rural areas, remain biased against the concept of women in positions of power. Women are adversely affected by these traditional stereotypes, which undermine their sense of self-esteem, confidence and potential to lead. Women's organisations, both formal such as NGOs, and informal such as the FBO and Women Councils for example, despite being major protagonists for women's mobilisation and advocacy, lack funding, logistical support, technical capacity and personnel to run function more effectively. Many ministries, commissions and local government entities do not have sufficient expertise in the arena of gender parity to execute proper planning, monitoring and evaluation to ensure that the objective is being properly pursued. Rwanda does not yet have adequate quantitative or qualitative gender-specific information from which to appropriately design its upcoming country strategy (or Integrated Strategic Plan). A major barrier for many, including Rwanda, has been the lack of gender data. The Ministry of Gender, itself recently restructured, lacks experienced personnel. Institutions responsible for advancing gender equality lack the political muscle and authority to demand accountability from other institutions. There is a weak system of coordinating interventions on gender issues. This is characterized by duplication of efforts, lack of information exchange and lack of serious prioritizing. There are many structures or mechanisms involved in promoting gender equality at national, local and community levels. Their functions, roles, and working arrangement are not well developed. The coordination system is still weak thus creating problems of duplication and weak networking. Donors who intervene in gender issues are not effectively coordinated. This worsens the problem of overlap and misallocation of resources. The rapid changes in the International Regional and National environments that need appropriate coping mechanisms and strategies to ensure gender equality priorities remain on focus. It is critically important to have a strong political will towards gender equality if women's participation is to be developed. However, political will must be supported by strong gender advocacy and gender sensitization to achieve results. But the actual problem lies in the

collaboration. Collaboration does exist in Rwanda but has been very limited in quality and quantity. Mainly, only the largest NGOs are collaborating with each other and the majority of instances of collaboration are limited to case referral. Additionally, logistical barriers, the crosscutting nature of GBV and mistrust and cleavages within Rwandan society can also account for a lack of collaboration in the area of GBV prevention and response. Coordinating bodies within Rwandan civil society and the government have the potential to ensure that the most effective GBV prevention activities are occurring, that GBV victims are receiving needed treatment, and that the most appropriate organizations are engaged in these activities. Like collaboration, however, effective coordination confronts many obstacles. The hierarchy of NGOs, which mirrors the hierarchy of government and often leaves smaller, rural NGOs without adequate voice, is an issue that affects collaboration among actors in GBV activities, but its causes and effects extend far beyond GBV. The culture of distrust which still exists in Rwanda also extends beyond GBV activities and NGO collaboration, and must be addressed by the country as a whole.

### **What is to be Done?**

For gender equality to be attained and sustained, it is important to have a strong training programme to provide necessary expertise in gender. For gender programmes to be effectively managed, it is imperative to establish a coordination system so that wastage and supplication of effort and resources are minimized. It is important to identify those traditional values that support the enhancement of women's status, and discourage those that reinforce gender based stereotyping. Linkages among civil society organizations working on issues of importance to women will result in less duplication of effort, a better chance of sustainability, the increased capacity to manage their own development, improved citizen involvement, and more efficient use of scarce resources. A stronger and more effective civil society will contribute to promotion and enforcement of women's legal rights and to the development of Rwanda as a whole. Civil society organizations involved represent a range of different types of organizations, such as widows' and women's organizations, education-focused NGOs, faith-based organizations, PLWHAs associations, and Haguruka, the



only legal aid organization that specializes in providing legal services for women. The most popular and prevalent activities utilized by these actors included sensitization, training and education of populations to raise awareness about GBV issues, the provision of legal aid and advice to GBV survivors, interpersonal counseling and health service provision to treat GBV survivors, income generation, mediation of disputes, advocacy and lobbying of policy and law makers, and research, monitoring and evaluation. According to their specializations and target groups, different actors conduct and collaborate on one or more of these activities to respond to GBV. There are few things need to be follow for the improvement in gender balance for example, Strengthening women's leadership and decision-making capacity; addressing women's time and labor constraints through promotion of labor-saving appropriate technologies; Improving women's access to information and knowledge. The government should integrate gender training in national human resource development institutions; With the support of donors, regional research centres on gender should be established and information shared among member countries; Affirmative actions in economic empowerment and education need to be initiated and strengthened by governments to close the capacity gap; Donor support should be better coordinated and focused on strategic areas for gender equality promotion. More resources should be made available to new areas like ICT and promotion of export trade. Government should strive to build a system of coordinating the various innovations on gender; The departments of statistics should produce and disseminate data in a gender-disaggregated manner. A system of monitoring and evaluation indicators that are gender sensitive should be developed; Civil society organisations should be provided with adequate resources to intensify gender awareness and advocacy programmes, particularly at the grass roots level ;More resources need to be invested in training women in skills -related to legislation, politics, communication management to enable them perform their new roles better; Gender awareness and training compaigns should be intensified at all levels. The need to turn political commitment into action; concrete measures have to be undertaken to turn political will into tangible results; The importance of building and strengthening partnerships between government and civil society , and men and women are need to be realized; The need to fully involve grassroots women's' groups in order to reinforce a sense of community ownership.

The importance of harnessing positive cultural values that promote gender equality; The importance of building the capacity of institutions and persons to spearhead gender mainstreaming to ensure sustainable gender equality; The importance of continuous support and political commitment in order to strengthen women's participation in political decision-making, The need for continuous multiple strategies using all available channels , such as educational institutions and media , to raise awareness and combat resistance to change. Post-genocide, radio and print media were used for the elites and the radio for mainly rural women. Through their associations of women journalists, women were able to successfully reach out to rural women and mobilize them for unity and reconciliation. The Ministry of Gender and other government departments used radio to air programmes on various policies and activities. Messages are communicated to the public to enlighten the population on issues of national interest such as reconciliation, fighting poverty, HIV/AIDS etc. For example, the HIV/AIDS campaign used radio programmes to mobilize women for voluntary counseling and testing. Many women came forward to be tested. The majority of persons living with HIV/AIDS in Rwanda are women. The existence of political will at the highest possible level and the seriousness and consistency with which the executive arm of government pursued a strategy for achieving gender equality, including enshrining it in the new constitution. The use of the media, particularly the radio airwaves, the most reliable medium of communication, to mobilise women to play a more active role in the country's development and sensitize the population to the advantages of gender equality was very effective. It is important to note that the implementation of this policy took the concerted effort of the Ministry of Gender and civil society organizations, women councils, members of women Parliamentarians caucus and many other actors. There was a deliberate campaign to mobilize women from all walks of life to come forward and present their candidature and also actively participate in the electoral process. National women councils played a crucial role in mobilizing the women at different levels. Institutions such as the Electoral Commission played a facilitating role in integrating the quota for women in the electoral laws. This highlights the extent to which national policies like gender policy and decentralization policy can be translated into action at local levels. The participation of women in the post-genocide period was significant in terms of

promoting reconciliation, providing survival needs for families, and taking care of orphans. Women's groups are an active and growing sector of civil society in Rwanda. Although women's roles have changed dramatically in the past ten years, Rwandan women were organizing for their rights before the war. During the third Global Conference of Women, held in Nairobi in 1985, Rwandan women mobilized to establish their first non-governmental women's organization, *Reseau des Femmes*, which identified rural women as its priority. The Union of Rwandese Women for Development (URAMA) was founded in 1988, and gained women the right to participate in cooperatives and profit-making businesses. *Haguruka*, an NGO created in 1991, still defends the social, economic and legal rights of women and children. These organizations continue to work on influencing Rwandan policy towards women. Many new civil society organizations have been created in recent years, doing advocacy and education on economic development for women, health and psychosocial issues, youth issues, and women's empowerment. In addition to the largest NGOs (Avega, Haguruka, RDF and RWN), the National Women's Councils has the largest membership and presence across Rwanda. The Women's Councils are seen as grassroots organizations which represent the best democratic and decentralized example of public membership among women and with increased capacity has the potential to expand GBV services to the wider audiences and groups. Some women in Rwanda's civil society have initiated a series of consultations with their grassroots membership, local populations, and prominent women serving in the government. They have developed a mechanism for loosely coordinating their advocacy among civil society (via the group Pro-Femmes), the executive branch (via the Ministry of Gender), and the legislative branch (via the Forum of Women Parliamentarians). This system was used to good effect during the ratification of the new constitution, which includes significant gender provisions. With respect to gender-based violence, it is recommended that appointment of Legal Advisor for the creation of sexual violence desks in each jurisdiction; additional training of the police force in dealing with gender-based violence, such as rape, domestic violence, and sexual harassment in the schools, would have a positive and broad impact on both male and female survivors. Decentralization plans of the government aimed at improving the ability of local communities to contribute to decision making and

making the locally elected representatives more accountable and efficient in local governments provide an opportunity to bring women more into the public decision-making process and to increase attention to and investment in issues that are of concern to them. It is recommended that Rwanda's government should establish support for the development of viable mechanisms to achieve meaningful participation of women in local affairs through: Analyzing the ways and means by which women communicate locally, have their voices heard, and contribute to decision making; Requiring the submission of a gender strategy for projects implemented by community based development initiatives; Fiscal Decentralization Project to provide financial training to locally elected women and gender sensitivity training to local male leaders; and Encouraging different project to include the Women Parliamentarians Group in the project's portfolio of activities; Consultation with the Legal Unit in the Gender Department of MIGEPROFE is also recommended.