



**THE ROLE OF THE RWANDAN PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN  
WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT: A CASE STUDY OF THE  
AGASEKE PROJECT IN RUYUMBA PARISH**

**BY**

**THERESE MUKAMAKUZA**

**STUDENT NUMBER: 208512217**

**The Role of the Rwandan Presbyterian Church in Women's  
Empowerment: A Case Study of the Agaseke Project in Ruyumba  
Parish**

**By**

**Thérèse Mukamakuza  
Student Number: 208512217**

**A Dissertation**

**Submitted to the Faculty of Humanities, Development and Social  
Sciences;**

**In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of  
MASTERS OF THEOLOGY (Theology and Development)  
In the School of Religion and Theology at the University of  
KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg—South Africa**

**Supervisor: Prof. Isabel A. Phiri**

**NOVEMBER 2009.**

## **DECLARATION**

I hereby declare that this dissertation, unless specifically indicated in the text, is my own work. It is submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Masters of Theology, in the School of Religion and Theology (Theology and Development) at the Faculty of Humanities, Development and Social Studies, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg Campus, South Africa.

**Thérèse Mukamakuza**

Pietermaritzburg

November 2009

---

**Thérèse Mukamakuza**  
**School of Religion and Theology;**  
**University of KwaZulu-Natal**

---

**Professor Isabel Phiri**  
**School of Religion and Theology;**  
**University of KwaZulu-Natal**

## **DEDICATION**

This dissertation is dedicated to my loving husband NIYIBIZI Emmanuel, my daughters IRADUKUNDA Clarisse and IRAKOZE Pierrine, and my son IMANISHIMWE Regis; I appreciate your support throughout this journey. You have been on my side from the beginning till end of this dissertation. You shared the commitment to love and encourage me at the time I needed it most. You made sacrifices to ensure that I completed my study at the right time without any obstacles.

It is also dedicated to the following people: my late brother Rev. Pastor GAKWANDI Pierre, who encouraged me to go for further studies and was eager to see my achievement; my mother Debora, my sister Rosalie, and my brothers Etienne and Thadee. All of them were killed in the brutal genocide of Rwanda in 1994. Your love and support will always be remembered.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

I wish to express my heartfelt gratitude to my supervisor, Prof. Isabel Apawo Phiri, for her wise guidance and expertise as we worked on this dissertation. Thank you for your encouragement and patience. You did not only supervise me but also you taught me to work hard with commitment. Indeed, working with you has brought tremendous growth in me.

Thanks to the World Council of Churches for financial support, that helped me to achieve my Master's degree from University of KwaZulu-Natal in South Africa. My gratitude goes to the Presbyterian Church in Rwanda that granted me permission to go for studies. I also extend my gratitude to the leaders of Ruyumba parish for allowing me to use Agaseke project as a case study and provide the information I needed. Thanks to women who openly shared their stories of livelihoods, which was useful for my dissertation.

My special thanks go to my mother-in-law Simonie Kahabaye who encouraged me to undertake my studies even though Rwandese culture would not normally understand me leaving alone her son and grandchildren. Your prayers and moral support showed me your sincere love which will never be forgotten. I am also deeply grateful to my extended family for staying close to my family and supporting them during my absence.

Thanks indeed to all my friends, especially Rev. Kabera Bazubagira Appoline for your prayers and advice when I was struggling with my studies and Sr. Theresa Mugwidi, for your social and moral support during my studies. Without you accompanying me, my life could have been difficult in South Africa.

The highest thanks go to the Almighty God for protection during my stay in South Africa.

## **ABSTRACT**

This study is designed to assess the role of the Rwandan Presbyterian Church in women's empowerment using a case study of the Agaseke Project in Ruyumba Parish. Women in Ruyumba area, like other parts of the country, have been affected by the genocide which happened in Rwanda in 1994. The country lost human and material resources. Today Rwanda is in the process of rebuilding. The majority of the population are women and more than 34 percent of families are headed by women. It is a challenge to the church that carries out God's mission in the world.

The Presbyterian Church as God's agent had to take initiatives to empower women who live in vulnerable contexts due to the consequences of genocide. They are also oppressed by patriarchal culture. Through training in various seminars and workshops the Church has contributed to the social transformation of Ruyumba Parish in Rwanda.

The research question of this study was to assess in what ways the Presbyterian Church in Rwanda has responded to women's empowerment through the Agaseke Project in Ruyumba Parish. The methodology used in order to attempt to answer this question was sharing stories with women involved in Agaseke Project. Through discussions, it was discovered that women have the potential to improve their livelihoods. From what the study shows, it can be said that women have natural gifts imparted to them by God. The gifts that women have can change the Church and society's attitudes bounded by patriarchal biases against women, which considers women as second-class citizens in participating fully in developmental agendas of the society.

In the conclusion of this study, it was argued that the Church needs to renew and transform its mission toward gender equality in order to change the hierarchy. This would lead to the formation of partnership between men and women as women are perceived as created equally in the image of God.

## **ABBREVIATIONS**

|        |   |
|--------|---|
| ABCD   | Asset Based Community Development             |
| AIDS   | Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome           |
| ARV    | Anti-Retroviral                               |
| AVEGA  | Association des Veuves du Genocide            |
| CFD    | Centre de Formation et Documentation          |
| IMF    | International Monetary Fund                   |
| HIV    | Human Immunodeficiency Virus                  |
| FAR    | Forces Armes Rwandaises                       |
| NGO(s) | Non-Governmental Organisation(s)              |
| RDC    | Republic Democratic of Congo                  |
| RFP    | Rwandan Patriotic Front                       |
| RIEPA  | Rwanda Investment and Export Promotion Agency |
| UNIFEM | United Nations Development Fund for Women     |
| UNHCR  | United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees |
| WARC   | World Alliance of Reformed Churches           |
| WCC    | World Council of Churches                     |

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

|  |           |
|--|-----------|
| Declaration.....   | iii       |
| Dedication.....  | iv        |
| Acknowledgment.....  | v         |
| Abstract.....  | vi        |
| Abbreviations.....   | vii       |
| Table of Contents.....                                       | viii      |
| <b>CHAPTER ONE .....</b>                                     | <b>1</b>  |
| <b>GENERAL INTRODUCTION.....</b>                             | <b>1</b>  |
| 1.1 Introduction.....  | 1         |
| 1.2 Theoretical Framework.....                               | 3         |
| 1.3 Research Methodology .....                               | 7         |
| 1.4 Limitation of the Study .....                            | 8         |
| 1.5 The Structure of the Study .....                         | 9         |
| 1.6 Conclusion .....   | 10        |
| <b>CHAPTER TWO .....</b>                                     | <b>11</b> |
| <b>THE EFFECT OF THE 1994 GENOCIDE ON RWANDAN WOMEN.....</b> | <b>11</b> |
| 2.1 Introduction.....  | 11        |
| 2.2 The Background of the 1994 Genocide .....                | 11        |
| 2.3 The Effect of the 1994 Genocide on Women .....           | 14        |
| 2.3.1 Sexual Violence Against Women .....                    | 15        |



|   |           |
|---|-----------|
| 2.3.2 HIV and AIDS .....  | 18        |
| 2.3.3 Economic Loss.....  | 20        |
| 2.3.4 The New Roles and Responsibilities .....                              | 21        |
| 2.3.5 Faith and Spirituality Affected.....                                  | 23        |
| 2.4 Conclusion .....  | 25        |
| <br>  |           |
| <b>CHAPTER THREE .....</b>  | <b>27</b> |
| <b>THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH ENGAGEMENT IN WOMEN’S<br/>EMPOWEREMENT .....</b> | <b>27</b> |
| 3.1 Introduction.....   | 27        |
| 3.2 Women and Poverty.....  | 28        |
| 3.3 The Causes of Poverty Among Rwandan Women .....                         | 29        |
| 3.3.1 Patriarchal Culture .....   | 29        |
| 3.3.2 Christian Tradition.....  | 32        |
| 3.3.3 Capitalist System .....   | 33        |
| 3.3.4 Women Themselves.....   | 35        |
| 3.4 Theological Motivation.....   | 37        |
| 3.4.1 God and Gender Justice .....  | 38        |
| 3.4.2. Jesus and Women’s Empowerment .....                                  | 39        |
| 3.4.3. The Early Church and Women’s Ministry.....                           | 39        |
| 3.5 Women’s Needs for Empowerment.....                                      | 40        |
| 3.5.1 Cultural and Biblical Hermeneutics.....                               | 41        |
| 3.5.2 Economic Empowerment.....   | 43        |
| 3.5.3 Self-reliant Development Projects .....                               | 45        |
| 3.6 Conclusion .....  | 47        |

|   |           |
|---|-----------|
| <b>CHAPTER FOUR.....</b>  | <b>48</b> |
| <b>THE HISTORY OF AGASEKE PROJECT IN RUYUMBA PARISH .....</b>           | <b>48</b> |
| 4.1 Introduction.....   | 48        |
| 4.2. Women’s Organisation in Ruyumba Parish.....                        | 48        |
| 4.3 Churchwomen and Income Generation Projects.....                     | 50        |
| 4.4. The Concept of Agaseke (Basket) Product.....                       | 53        |
| 4.4.1. Traditional Aspects of Agaseke .....                             | 54        |
| 4.4.2. Social Aspects of Agaseke.....                                   | 54        |
| 4.4.3. Economic Aspects of Agaseke.....                                 | 55        |
| 4.5. Agaseke Project in Ruyumba Parish.....                             | 56        |
| 4.6. Conclusion .....   | 57        |
| <br>  |           |
| <b>CHAPTER FIVE .....</b>   | <b>59</b> |
| <b>PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF FIELD</b>               |           |
| <b>RESEARCH FINDINGS.....</b>   | <b>59</b> |
| 5.1 Introduction.....   | 59        |
| 5.2 Field Work Methodology.....   | 59        |
| 5.3 Problems Encountered .....  | 62        |
| 5.4 Presentation of Research Findings.....                              | 63        |
| 5.4.1 Leaders’ Responses.....   | 63        |
| 5.4.2 Focus Group Discussions’ Responses .....                          | 65        |
| 5.4.2.1 Gender Inequality in Education, Lack of Property Ownership..... | 66        |
| 5.4.2.2 Women’s Participation in Church’s Leadership.....               | 68        |
| 5.4.2.3 Economic Empowerment through Agaseke Project .....              | 70        |
| 5.4.3 The Summary of the Three Focus Group Discussions .....            | 75        |
| 5.5 Data Analysis .....   | 77        |
| 5.6 The Challenges.....   | 80        |
| 5.7 Conclusion .....  | 80        |

|   |           |
|---|-----------|
| <b>CHAPTER SIX .....</b>  | <b>82</b> |
| <b>TOWARD THE CHURCH’S VISION OF WOMEN’S EMPOWEREMENT AS MISSION OF GOD TO THE WORLD.....</b>     | <b>82</b> |
| 6.1 Introduction.....   | 82        |
| 6.2 Is the Presbyterian Church Doing Enough to Empower Women to Experience Life Abundantly? ..... | 82        |
| 6.3 Renewal and Transformation of the Church Mission in Relation to Women’s Empowerment .....     | 84        |
| 6.3.1 Teaching as a Tool of Social Transformation.....  | 85        |
| 6.3.2 Retrieving Women’s Stories in the Church .....  | 87        |
| 6.3.3 Women as Transformation Agents .....  | 88        |
| 6.4 Conclusion .....  | 90        |
| <br><b>CHAPTER SEVEN.....</b>   | <b>91</b> |
| <b>GENERAL CONCLUSION.....</b>  | <b>91</b> |
| 7.1 Introduction.....   | 91        |
| 7.2 A Way Forward.....  | 93        |
| 7.2.1 Mapping Assets.....   | 93        |
| 7.2.2 Building Relationship .....   | 94        |
| 7.3 Conclusion .....  | 94        |
| <br><b>BIBLIOGRAPHY .....</b>   | <b>95</b> |
| <br>APPENDIX 1.....   | 107       |
| APPENDIX 2.....   | 108       |

## CHAPTER ONE

### GENERAL INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Introduction

This study attempts to examine and understand how the Rwandan Presbyterian Church as a transformation agent in God's mission in the world is engaged in women's empowerment through the "the Agaseke Project" in Ruyumba Parish. The poverty among Rwandan women resulting from gender inequality has been aggravated by the 1994 genocide which affected the whole population in general and women in particular.

The Presbyterian family of Churches, like all Christian Churches, traces its roots back to the apostolic Church. It stands in the tradition of the Church Fathers and also of the 16<sup>th</sup> century Reformers like Martin Luther, Huldreich Zwingli and John Calvin, who called the Church to return to the gospel.<sup>1</sup> Thus the Presbyterian Church in Rwanda belongs to the Reformed Churches which stems from Zwingli's reformation in Zurich and Calvin in Geneva. It was established in 1907 by the German Bethel Mission who came, together with Tanzanians, to start what became the Presbyterian Church in Rwanda. After the First World War, German missionaries were replaced by Belgians and Swiss, who were joined later by Dutch missionaries. The leading organ of the Presbyterian Church is the General Synod of which fifty percent of the members are women.<sup>2</sup> Ruyumba is one of Ruyumba Regional Synod's Parishes of the Presbyterian Church in Rwanda that started in 1967 and is located in the rural areas of the District of Kamonyi, South of the Country. This parish has a membership of around 2607 in which women are the majority, as is generally the case in many denominations after the 1994 genocide.<sup>3</sup>

Since the Presbyterian Church was established in Rwanda, it has been involved in various development projects such as establishing schools, hospitals and training institutions and not to mention a wide range of other empowerment projects. This study reflects on the role of the

---

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.accraconfession.org> : accessed on 18<sup>th</sup> October 2009.

<sup>2</sup> Elisee Musemakweli and Willems, William. 2007. *Eglise Presbytérienne au Rwanda sa mission et son témoignage 1907 à 2007: Centième Anniversaire*. Bruxelles, Imprimerie N.DE JONGE. p 11.

<sup>3</sup> Elisee Musemakweli and Willems, William .2007. p 22.

Church in women's empowerment in the context of the Rwandan Presbyterian Church. I examine its ministry in relation to women who experience extreme poverty and oppression as the consequence of the 1994 genocide, as well as the patriarchal structures in Rwandan society. To address this issue, in 1996 the Presbyterian Church in Rwanda started a Training and Documentation Centre (CFD in French). Its objective was to invite Rwandan people, especially Churches and religious confessions to take up current challenges, which have always been considered as officials' prerogatives.<sup>4</sup> Thus, the CFD set up a women's program with the aim of empowering women to participate in the socio-economic development; poverty reduction and job creation initiatives as they fight against gender imbalances.<sup>5</sup> In implementing this vision, CFD started training women's groups from different parishes through seminars and workshops in order to build their capacities. One of the women's groups that received this training was from Ruyumba Parish, this group later decided to embark on "the Agaseke Project" in 1999 in order to sustain their livelihoods. The historical background of the Agaseke project will be discussed in more detail in chapter four of this study.

There are three reasons why the researcher has chosen this topic. Firstly, the fact that she is a Rwandan woman means she shares the same background as other women who experience poverty because of the genocide and patriarchal system. This means that this research will be an insider's perspective into the challenges of Rwandan women. Secondly, as a student of Theology and Development programme, the researcher is concerned about gender and development. Thirdly, as a Church minister, the researcher is equally interested in the engagement of the Presbyterian Church in women's struggle for development. This research is her little contribution towards the current effort by the Rwandan government, the Presbyterian Church and other stakeholders in rebuilding the country after the genocide especially with regards to women and development.

The study aims to understand the role of the Rwandan Presbyterian Church in empowering women of Ruyumba parish who are involved in an income generation project named Agaseke project. Therefore, the research question of this study is the following: "In what

---

<sup>4</sup> Désire Rutaganda. 2007. *Collaboration entre Chrétiens et Musulmans dans la lutte contre la pauvreté au Rwanda*, Kigali: CFD. pp12-13

<sup>5</sup> Désire Rutaganda. 2007. p 14.

ways has the Presbyterian Church in Rwanda responded to the need for women's empowerment through "the Agaseke Project" in Ruyumba Parish?"

In order to answer the above question, the following sub-questions were asked:

- What is the impact of the Agaseke project in improving the livelihoods of women of Ruyumba Presbyterian Parish?
- What has motivated the Presbyterian Church to be involved in women's empowerment?
- How has the Presbyterian Church empowered women through the Agaseke project?
- How could the findings of this study be used to promote the church's vision of economic empowerment of women as part of the church's involvement in the mission of God in the world?

The objectives of this study were:

- To investigate the roots of poverty and its negative impact on Rwandan women after the 1994 genocide;
- To document through women's stories their experiences of being economically empowered by the Presbyterian Church in Rwanda;
- To reflect theologically on what motivated the Church to be involved in empowerment of the poor people;
- To establish how the church can help to mobilise women's assets for economic empowerment in order to sustain their livelihoods.

## **1.2 Theoretical Framework**

Since Theology and Development is interdisciplinary in nature, the study draws on two key theories: one in theology, and another in development. From a theological point of view, the study adopted the "liberation theological" framework, which contextually includes African women's theologies. Like other feminist theologies, African women's theologies use the experience of women as its point of departure. The experience of Rwandan women may differ from the rest of Africa but as women there are common burdens they share. Those include patriarchal systems in religion and culture. African women, as Oduyoye argues, see

themselves as the custodians of life, sustainers of community, transmitters and upholders of culture. Furthermore, Oduyoye states that "...they are women who are doubly and triply burdened, women whose humanity needs to be claimed."<sup>6</sup> Thus, like many countries in Africa, Rwanda is traditionally characterised by a patriarchal social structure that underlies the unequal social power relations between men and women, boys and girls. Therefore, African feminist cultural hermeneutics is an appropriate tool to analyse this study because of its emphasis first, on analysing African culture from a gendered perspective. Although culture forms our identity, African women theologians, have stated that not everything in our cultures promotes the well being of people. There are aspects of African cultures that are oppressive<sup>7</sup>, especially to women, as challenged by both Oduyoye<sup>8</sup> and Kanyoro<sup>9</sup>. Indeed, because of the way Africans read the Bible, African women are warned to use a 'hermeneutic of suspicion' when reading the Bible because in as much as the Bible is liberative for women, it is also oppressive,<sup>10</sup> as Oduyoye laments, 'Only on very rare occasions have African church-women challenged African culture, even when they have judged its practices to be inhuman and unjust'.<sup>11</sup> Feminist cultural hermeneutics has shown that both the African and the biblical cultures are patriarchal, and this has been used as a tool to oppress women. Feminist cultural hermeneutics therefore seeks to critically analyse a variety of issues, highlighting the oppressive elements of both African and biblical cultures, while reclaiming and retaining the liberative elements in both African cultures and Biblical traditions. More details are discussed in chapter three.

The second theory used in this study, from the discipline of Development, is Asset-Based Community Development Approach (ABCD). I will discuss this below.

Assets Based Community Development is an approach to development suggested by John Kretzman and John McKnight in their book *Building a community from inside out: A path*

---

<sup>6</sup> Mercy Amba Oduyoye. 2001. *Introducing African women's theology*. Sheffield: Academic Press. p. 24.

<sup>7</sup> African women theologians challenge the male African theologians who attempt to 'inculturate' Christianity but failing to take into account the patriarchal elements found in African cultures, thus, liberating only half of the African people, leaving out the women, (Kanyoro, 2002; Oduyoye, 1995; Phiri in J Parratt, 1997; E Bolaji Idowu, 1975; John Pobee, 1979).

<sup>8</sup> Oduyoye, M.A. 2001..

<sup>9</sup> Kanyoro, M R A. 1996. *In search of a round table: Gender, theology & Church leadership* Geneva and Kanyoro, 2002a *Introducing feminist cultural hermeneutics: African perspective*, Cleveland: The Pilgrim Press. pp. 25-26.

<sup>10</sup> Oduyoye, (2001, 1995).

<sup>11</sup> Oduyoye, M.A. 'Biblical interpretation and the social location of the interpreter: African women's reading of the Bible' in F F Segovia and M Tolbert (eds), *Reading from this place: Social location and biblical interpretation in global perspective* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995), pp. 39.

toward finding and mobilising a community's asset.<sup>12</sup> The basic premise of the ABCD approach is that instead of focussing on the needs and problems of the community as in conventional community development models, initial assessment should focus on the available resources and capacities of the community.<sup>13</sup> Taking this as its starting point, the ensuing analysis shifts from a 'glass is half-empty' perspective and a focus on what needs to be brought into the community to address problems, to a 'glass is half-full' conclusion and decisions about how to strengthen and build on what is already available in the community.<sup>14</sup>

The ABCD approach is seen against a need-driven approach to community development and to development practice in general.<sup>15</sup> This need-driven approach focuses on the needs and deficiencies of the people. It means that it is led by outsiders or external agencies. Rather ABCD advocates change from below in the community members themselves. People at the grassroots level are encouraged to lead and take charge in the development practice.<sup>16</sup>

As Rehanma asserts, no one can pretend to resolve poor people's problems even if he or she claims to be an expert in development. Poor people know what they want, when, where and how. They are experts from their experiences of daily life.<sup>17</sup> Therefore, unless a project comes from the community itself, it will never be a project of the people; they will never perceive it as their program but rather a project or a program of government, NGOs, Church or any other agency. And because the people have no ownership in the program, they remain spectators and clients of it, never participants and goal-owners. ABCD gives power to citizens to promote what is in their hands for their own interest and local people become the primary beneficiaries. Nevertheless, this approach does not exclude the input or the contribution of the local organisations and associations already existing in the community and outside.<sup>18</sup> Ellis argues that sustainable livelihoods can be achieved only if external support works with people in a way that is congruent with their current livelihood strategies.<sup>19</sup> Ellis'

---

<sup>12</sup> John Kretzman and John McKnight. 1993. *Building a community from inside out: A path toward finding and mobilizing a community's asset*. Chicago: ACTA Publications.

<sup>13</sup> John Kretzman and John McKnight. 1993. p 1.

<sup>14</sup> John Kretzman and John McKnight. 1993. pp 5-7.

<sup>15</sup> John Kretzman and John McKnight. 1993. pp1-4.

<sup>16</sup> John Kretzman and John McKnight. 1993. p 8.

<sup>17</sup> Rahnema Majid in Sachs W. (ed) 1992. *In Development Dictionary: A Guide to knowledge as Power*. Witwatersand University Press, Johannesburg. p 116.

<sup>18</sup> John Kretzman and John McKnight. 1993. p 16.

<sup>19</sup> F. Ellis 2000. *Rural livelihoods and diversity in developing countries*. Oxford: IDS. p 9.



statement emphasises people-centred development with an alternative process of participatory enquiry at community level.

Although the ABCD approach was not promoted as a Christian approach, it is in harmony with the Christian faith. It seems to speak from the perspective, and value the role and contributions, of the local church in community development. Therefore, Churches and local congregations are in a good position to identify and mobilise the resources and assets. Steve de Gruchy has pointed out some key elements in common between the ABCD approach and the Christian faith. These include, first, that both ABCD and Christian faith recognise that all people are made in the image of God; therefore they have innate value, whether they are young, aged, disabled or illiterate. Second, ABCD approach and Christian faith both affirm that all people have a vocation. Third, they both believe in the fundamental importance of community. And, fourth, they both accept that the church and Christians are assets to the community- the light to the world and salt of the earth.<sup>20</sup>

Consequently, a Christian response should be to consider and value each and everyone in a congregation as gifted in different ways and consider also Christian assets for community development. The community only becomes a community when people are engaged in the process of building it through sharing and loving one another as God wants us to do and enjoying every individual's potential and talent. A Church that uses the ABCD model will start by identifying and acknowledging the people who make up the Church, then through a collaborative process, begin to identify their assets including their spiritual gifts, their natural talents and expertise, and the wealth of experience and wisdom that they bring to the local Church. de Gruchy argues that the Christian concern for development must be rooted in the vocation of the poor rather than depending on the compassion of rich people.<sup>21</sup> Therefore, the Church with its prophetic voice is called to challenge the kind of development which dehumanises God's people.

Mapping the individual's assets is a way of knowing the individual gifts and capacities people have. It has the effect of stimulating excitement and vision from within the community and they do not feel that a goal has been imposed upon them. It also removes the sense of frustration that goes with setting goals that are outside the capabilities or interests of

---

<sup>20</sup> Class discussion with Steve de Gruchy on 12 August 2008.

<sup>21</sup> Steve de Gruchy. 2003. "Of Agency, Assets and Appreciation: Seeking Some Commonalities Between Theology and Development", *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa*. p 31.

the group, or that are not practical at that particular time.<sup>22</sup> When a Church, undertakes this process it recognises the additional asset of the Holy Spirit so the process is not just driven around identifying the human assets, but is focussed very much on helping the community to discover what God has done and is continuing to do amongst them.

Furthermore, Christian community can use ABCD approach to discover and examine biblical illustrations that demonstrate the importance of the approach. God's mission to the Church is to care for the community and proclaim the Kingdom of God. In implementation of the ABCD approach, the church is fulfilling the *Shalom* mandate, where God's people have life in its fullness.<sup>23</sup> The ABCD approach can be useful both when Church plays the role of community builders and when the church offers itself as an asset to be used by other local community builders. Therefore the Church should learn about tools and resources to apply an ABCD approach to building and connecting local communities and congregations. ABCD is a particularly innovative and effective approach in empowering women and an example of best practice in the global effort to end poverty and injustice.

Using both frameworks the study aims at analysing how the Rwandan Presbyterian Church has engaged in liberating and valuing women in Ruyumba Parish by using their gifts and talents, and how these could be utilised positively for ensuring sustainable livelihoods.

### **1.3 Research Methodology**

The dissertation is divided into two sections. Firstly I draw information from field research and analysis of the findings. This research is an empirical study which uses a qualitative approach. Babbie and Mouton point out that, "qualitative researchers attempt always to study human action from the perspective of the social actors themselves. The primary goal of studies using this approach is defined as 'describing and understanding' rather than 'explaining' human behaviour".<sup>24</sup> Therefore, this study has investigated and analyse the concrete life situation of women in Ruyumba parish as they challenged by poverty but working hard to overcome it through initiative projects. The focus group discussions were a significant tool because they involved persons especially selected because of their marital

---

<sup>22</sup> John Kretzman and John McKnight. 1993. p 10.

<sup>23</sup> Class discussion with Steve de Gruchy on 12 August 2008.

<sup>24</sup> Babbie and Mouton 2001. P 270.

status and involvement in the Agaseke project. Three groups of five informants involved in the Agaseke project of the parish; in each group formed the focus group discussion. The in-depth interviews were also conducted with three individuals selected because of their leadership positions in relation of the Agaseke project. This was to collect information on as many issues as possible that influenced the experiences of women.

Nevertheless, awareness of some of the restrictions in focus group discussions such as the possibility of digression; the possibility of members feeling intimidated and being unable to discuss freely. I brought together groups of women through the key informants who arranged with them a convenient time and place for themselves. To avoid domination in group the researcher preferred to be the facilitator and always observed the required discipline. The researcher presented and introduced the issues to be discussed by the group. The researcher allowed the people to discuss and articulate their views and opinions freely. The discussions were around the themes of gender and development; Church and women's empowerment; and the impact of the Agaseke project on women's lives of Ruyumba parish. The details of the fieldwork research will be discussed in chapter five.

Secondly, the study also made use of secondary source materials that are relevant to the topic, such as published and unpublished books and journals, internet articles, unpublished papers as well as other documents from the Presbyterian Church in Rwanda. These include workshop reports and minutes of meetings. Stewart and Kamins define these sources as information collected by others which are related to the research topic. They emphasise that secondary information is almost and always the point of departure of primary research, and provides "...an opportunity to learn what is already known, and what remains to be learned, about a particular topic."<sup>25</sup> In the context of this study, the secondary information is based on previous work done around women's empowerment as part of the Church mission to the world.

#### **1.4 Limitation of the Study**

The first limitation was that the study is only 20,000 words in such a sensitive area of research, and the time frame for the research exercise was short. However, the researcher

---

<sup>25</sup> David W. Stewart and Michel A. Kamins. 1993. *Secondary Research, Information Sources and methods* (second Edition). London: SAGE Publication. p 1.

took time to summarise the dissertation to the required words without distorting important information. The second limitation is that the major focus of this study is the Agaseke project in Ruyumba Parish. It is likely that there are other places that women have shown their potential in the area of weaving baskets in Rwanda. The researcher conducted interviews and focus group discussions concerning women's experiences, in Ruyumba parish. The third limitation is that the researcher is a pastor in the Presbyterian Church. This raises a situation of power relation where the researcher has power over the researched. Aware of such problematic situations, the researcher used it as a point of advantage. She identified with them first as a woman with whom they share the same burdens and experiences of womanhood. This helped me to develop friendship and closeness instead of distance with them. Moreover, the fact that the researcher is a student means that currently she is not occupying any position in the Church. It enabled her to be neutral about Church issues during fieldwork.

### **1.5 The structure of the Study**

Chapter one is the general introduction to the study. It includes the background of the study, research problems and objectives, theoretical framework, research methodology, limitations of the study, and the structure of the study. Chapter two looks at the impact of the 1994 Genocide on Rwandan women. It discusses briefly the historical background of the 1994 genocide and its negative impact on women. Chapter three is about the engagement of the Presbyterian Church in women's empowerment issues. It discusses theological reflections on empowering the poor and marginalised people. It indicates women's need for liberation as a key for development. The chapter highlights the reason why the Presbyterian Church in Rwanda should be engaged in women's empowerment through initiating projects such as "the Agaseke project" in Ruyumba parish. Chapter four discusses the history of the Agaseke Project in Ruyumba Parish. It indicates the meaning and different aspects of the Agaseke product in Rwanda. This points out how women in Ruyumba Parish started the Agaseke project using their gifts and talents in weaving baskets to gain income. Chapter five focuses on the presentation, analysis and interpretation of research findings. It combines two sections; firstly it points out the methodology used to collect and analyse the data. Secondly it presents the research findings. The analysis of the responses covers the theme of gender and poverty, Church and women's empowerment in Ruyumba parish, and the impact of the Agaseke Project on women's lives. Chapter six discusses the church's vision of women's empowerment as part God's mission to the world. This chapter examines the challenges of

the research findings and discusses women's liberation and gender equality as challenges presented by the study. The chapter suggests the renewal and transformation of the Church's vision in relation to women's empowerment. Chapter seven concludes the study and gives some recommendations for further research in the same area.

## **1.6 Conclusion**

The chapter introduced the study on the role of the Rwandan Presbyterian Church in women's empowerment: a case study of the Agaseke project in Ruyumba Parish. It also outlined the background of the research topic, the reason for choosing the topic, the research problem and objectives, the theoretical framework, research methodology, limitations of the study and structure of the study. In chapter two, I look at the impact of the 1994 Genocide on Rwandan women, and an overview of the historical background to the genocide. This includes the extremely negative impact on women and the impoverishment of their living conditions.

## CHAPTER TWO

### THE EFFECT OF THE 1994 GENOCIDE ON RWANDAN WOMEN

#### 2.1 Introduction

The term “genocide” designates the intentional systematic destruction of a group of persons such as religious group, national group, ethnic group or race. The legal meaning of this notion comes from the United Nations Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, article 2 (United Nations 1948) stipulating that genocide is

...any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such: (a) killing members of the group; (b) causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group; (c) deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part; (d) imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group; (e) forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.<sup>26</sup>

In 1994, such events occurred in Rwanda. These were carried out by the government with the intent to exterminate the Tutsi ethnic group. More than 800,000 people were killed, around 2,000,000 left the country and an estimated 500,000 women and girls were raped, tortured and physically abused.<sup>27</sup> Although Rwanda is in the process of rebuilding and empowering women, the negative impact of these horrors is still felt. Therefore, one cannot talk about women’s empowerment in Rwanda outside of the genocide context. It is a major cause of poverty and vulnerability among Rwandan people in general and women in particular. Hence, there is a need to understand the context in which this event occurred and what happened. This chapter provides a brief history of that genocide and its negative impact on women including sexual violence, HIV and AIDS, economic loss, new roles and responsibilities and the effects of the genocide on their spirituality.

#### 2.2 The Background of the 1994 Genocide

Rwanda is located in Central Africa, bordered on the north by Uganda, on the east by Tanzania, by Burundi on the south and by the Democratic Republic of Congo on the west.

---

<sup>26</sup>United Nations. 1948. Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide Adopted by Resolution 260 (III) A of the U.N. General Assembly on 9 December 1948.; Entry into force: 12 January 195 (http://www.preventgenocide.org/law/convention/text.htm accessed on May 20, 2008).

<sup>27</sup> John Martin. 1995. Rwanda: Why? *Transformation* 12(2): p 3.

Rwanda has thirty districts in five provinces: East, North, West, South and Kigali City. It is ranked amongst the nine poorest countries in the world. It is a landlocked country, located approximately 2,000 km from the Atlantic Ocean and 1,200 km from the Indian Ocean. Its surface is 26,338 sq km of which eleven percent is covered with lakes and marshes, and six percent with natural forests.<sup>28</sup> Rwanda has a population of 8,128,553 inhabitants of whom 52,3 percent are women. Women-headed households comprise thirty-four percent of the population.<sup>29</sup> Before 1994, few people outside the region knew much about Rwanda, as a small, densely populated country in the centre of Africa, a land of thousands of hills. However, violent conflicts marked Rwanda's transition from colonial rule to independence in the early 1960s. The genocide created a large refugee population in surrounding countries, and as a consequence, Rwanda is known for its genocide experiences.

Although the 1994 genocide came to its culmination on 7<sup>th</sup> April 1994 after the death of the Rwandan President, Habyarimana Juvenal, a Hutu, in a plane crash, genocide had been planned for years.<sup>30</sup> The conflagration had been incubating for four years, fuelled by a severe economic crisis, the hindered democratisation initiatives, and ethnic divisions between Hutu and Tutsi, Rwanda's two major ethnic groups.<sup>31</sup> As this chapter is about the effect of the 1994 genocide on women rather than the cause of the conflict itself, or when the seeds of conflict were planted, this section on the history of the genocide is not intended to comprehensively discern the origins of the conflict amongst the Hutu and Tutsi people. Nonetheless, an understanding of Hutu and Tutsi relationships helps to understand the attitudes of those committing violence during the genocide.

Before colonisation, Rwandan ethnic groups had good relationships even though some confrontations were observed. Still, the Tutsi have dominated the Hutu in all domains and the Hutu were forced to submit to Tutsi. It was in this situation of Tutsi domination that the colonial powers came into the country.<sup>32</sup> During the second half of the nineteenth century, the idea of a divinely ordered Tutsi superiority began to gain prominence as a result of certain

---

<sup>28</sup> MINICOFIN, 2003. Report. Kigali. p 7.

<sup>29</sup> Association des Veuves du Genocide. Agahozo. 1999. *Etudes sur les violences faites aux femmes au Rwanda*: Kigali p 19.

<sup>30</sup> Tatab H. Mbuy, Tatab H. 1995. The Rwanda nightmare: a source of great pain for the Synod fathers. *African Ecclesial Review* 37(1): p 52.

<sup>31</sup> Tatab H Mbuy. 1995. p 53.

<sup>32</sup> Simangakiso, Kumalo. 2007. The place, the parish and the power: Church-State relations in Rwanda and the genocide. In *Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae*. XXXIII, 2. p. 221.

forces.<sup>33</sup> Consequently, German colonialists favoured the Tutsi in several domains, including education, government and commerce.<sup>34</sup> For example, a school for administration was established at Nyanza (South) to prepare cadres for the indirect rule. Such state apparatus and other Rwandan schools were confined to the education of the Tutsi. In that school, Chrétien reveals that over three-quarters of the students were Tutsi and only Tutsi could attain the higher echelons of the local colonial state hierarchy.<sup>35</sup> At that time, the Hutu were more accepted in seminaries than in schools.<sup>36</sup>

In leadership, Germans colonialists never established a large presence in Rwanda. In 1914, only five civil servants were appointed for the whole country to support the Tutsi as the 'superior race'. This was achieved through indirect rule characterised by control through military assistance to Tutsi controllers of 'independent' kingdoms.<sup>37</sup> Later, Belgians maintained this system when they replaced the Germans.<sup>38</sup> Nevertheless, it happened that, for economic, political and religious reasons, the colonialists stopped supporting the Tutsi and started privileging the Hutu. Belgians started helping the Hutu to change their perception of themselves and allowed them to go to school if they complied with the Belgian policies. As a result of this new relationship between Hutu and colonial powers, Hutu political movements demanded the end of Hutu subordination and they sought to overthrow the Tutsi hegemony.<sup>39</sup>

The crisis worsened in November 1959 when the Tutsi youth rebelled and attacked Hutu leaders, resulting in thousands of deaths, and the flight of hundreds of thousands of Tutsis to neighbouring countries along with the new Mwami.<sup>40</sup> By 1965 Uganda housed no less than 400 000 Tutsis. Many others flew to Tanzania, Zaire and Burundi where they continued to live in exile for many years before reclaiming their rights to return back to country.<sup>41</sup> When General Major Juvenal Habyarimana took over the power in 1973, he did not succeed in

---

<sup>33</sup> Mahmood, Mamdani. 2001. *When victims become killers: Colonialism, nativism and genocide in Rwanda*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press .p 22.

<sup>34</sup> Taylor, C. 1999. *Sacrifice as Terror: The Rwanda genocide of 1994*. Oxford: New York: BERG. p 69.

<sup>35</sup> Taylor, C. 1999. p 66.

<sup>36</sup> Alain, Destexhe. 1995. *Rwanda and genocide in the twentieth century*, London: Pluto Press. pp41

<sup>37</sup> Alain, Destexhe. 1995. p 40.

<sup>38</sup> Peter, Hammond. 1996. *Holocaust in Rwanda: The role of Gun Control, Media Manipulation, Liberal Church Leaders and the United Nations*. Cape Town: Frontline Fellowship. p 61.

<sup>39</sup> Salomon Emmanuel, Surwumwe. 2007. *A contextual theological approach to New Testament interpretation: The relevance of 2 Corinthians 5:18-21 to reconciliation in Post-genocide Rwanda through church mediation*. M.A. thesis, Pietermaritzburg: University of KwaZulu-Natal, School of Religion and Theology. p.54.

<sup>40</sup> T. Tschuy. 1997. *Ethnic conflict and Religion: The Challenge to the Churches, Rwanda*. Geneva: WCC Publication. p.57.

<sup>41</sup> Flegley, Randall. 1993. *Rwanda*. World bibliography Series Vol. 154 Oxford: CLIO. p30.



luring back the exiled Tutsis; instead the growing corruption in his government estranged other Hutu groups from him. Consequently the Tutsi refugees decided to come by force.

It is in this context in the beginning of October 1990, members of the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF), based in Uganda and composed primarily of the descendants of Rwandan Tutsi refugees who had fled the violence thirty years earlier, initiated attacks on northern Rwanda. The RPF claimed that it was fighting to ensure the right of return for all exiles, and to install a more democratic regime in Rwanda.<sup>42</sup> In early 1993, the RPF staged vigorous offensive attacks and occupied large portions of northern Rwanda. Almost a million people, primarily Hutu, fled from these areas to seek refuge in displaced persons' settlements north of Kigali and elsewhere in the country.<sup>43</sup> The Rwandan government of President Juvénal Habyarimana, dominated by Hutu from the north of the country, used the civil war to provoke the RPF.<sup>44</sup>

However, the event that activated the genocide in Rwanda was a plane crash on the night of 6<sup>th</sup> April 1994 that killed President Habyarimana Juvenal, and several members of Habyarimana's government.<sup>45</sup> To avenge Habyarimana's death, extremists associated with his regime immediately began to exterminate the Tutsi minority in the country. The *Forces Armées Rwandaises* (FAR), especially the Presidential Guard, carried out much of the killing. Civilian militias that were recruited, armed, and trained by the political and military officials, who planned the genocide, also took part. Sadly over a period of 100 days, more than 800,000 Rwandans, most of them Tutsi, were massacred.<sup>46</sup> Most victims were physically or psychologically tortured before finally killing them or leaving them to die. Murderers often stripped them naked before killing, both to acquire their clothes without stains or tears and to humiliate them.<sup>47</sup> However, women were particularly tortured. In the next section, I address how the 1994 genocide affected women specifically.

---

<sup>42</sup> Mahmood, Mamdani. 2001. p 31.

<sup>43</sup> Mahmood, Mamdani. 2001. p 35.

<sup>44</sup> Mahmood, Mamdani .2001. p 35.

<sup>45</sup> Antoine, Rutayisire. 1995. *Faith under Fire: Testimonies of Christian Bravery. Buckhurst Hill: African Evangelism Enterprise.* p 17.

<sup>46</sup> McCullum, M. 1994. *The Angels have left us: The Rwandan tragedy and the Church.* Geneva : WCC. p 20.

<sup>47</sup> Alison, Des Forges and al. 1999. *Leave none to tell the story: Genocide in Rwanda.* New York: Human Right Watch. p 216.

## 2.3 The Effect of the 1994 Genocide on Women

In previous episodes of violence in Rwanda, men had been the main targets while women and children were usually spared. It was taboo to kill women and children in Rwandan tradition. Nevertheless during the 1994 genocide, things turned the other way around; women were killed in an imaginable ways. Tutsi women in general were at risk, even those married to Hutu men, as were Hutu women married to Tutsi men, Hutu women who tried to protect Tutsi, and Hutu women associated with groups seen as opponents of the Habyarimana Juvenal regime.<sup>48</sup> One of the first women killed in the massacre that began on 7 April 1994 was Madam Agathe Uwilingiyimana, a leader in the political party *Mouvement Democratique Rwandais*, and Rwanda's first woman Prime Minister who conducted a "crusade for justice, reconciliation and tolerance".<sup>49</sup> Individual women were at risk simply because of their gender, while certain categories of women were targeted because of their actual or presumed membership in particular groups as noted above.

All Tutsi women were targeted, simply because they were Tutsi, and large numbers were killed, often after having been subjected to sexual violence and torture, as discussed in the following section.

### 2.3.1 Sexual Violence Against Women

In times of war and conflict, violence against women becomes more exacerbated and hundreds of thousands of women and children suffer daily from an imaginable forms of physical, psychological, emotional and sexual abuse.<sup>50</sup> Moreover, Gallagher states that "...at least one in every three women around the world has been beaten, coerced into sex, or otherwise abused in her lifetime".<sup>51</sup> Thus, Rwandan women count among countless horrible examples throughout the world of atrocities committed against women.

As discussed earlier, during the one hundred days of genocide that ravaged Rwanda, more than 800,000 thousand peoples were killed while hundreds of thousands of women and girls

---

<sup>48</sup> Medith Turshen. 1998. "Favours to Give and Consenting Victims." in Twagiramariya and Turshen eds *What Women Do in Wartime: Gender and Conflict in Africa*. London: Zed Books. p 112.

<sup>49</sup> McCullum M. 1994. p 23.

<sup>50</sup> World Council of Churches. 2004. "Overcoming violence against women and children" Echoes: Justice, Peace and creation News 23/2004, p 1.

<sup>51</sup> Vincent A. Gallagher. 2006. *The true Cost of Low prices: The violence of Globalisation*. New York: Orbis books. P 90.

were raped or experienced forms of sexual violence. In the 1996 report of the United Nations Special Reporter on Rwanda, it was found that "...rape was a rule and its absence the exception."<sup>52</sup> According to the report, rape was systematic and used as a 'weapon' by perpetrators of the massacres. The same report estimated that between 250,000 to 500,000 Rwandese women and girls had been raped during the genocide.<sup>53</sup> The sexual violence was inflicted upon the women with complete impunity, and as a very effective weapon of war. In agreement with the UN report, McCullum states that the sexual violence was used as a weapon to humiliate the Tutsi as a group by destroying their women.<sup>54</sup> He emphasises that mostly Tutsi women and girls of all ages, were sexually attacked. In relation to this, Des Forges indicates that even baby girls of two years old were raped.<sup>55</sup> Sexual violence was a step in the process of destruction of the Tutsi group, destruction of the spirit, of the will to live and of life itself.<sup>56</sup>

Some rapes however, were directed toward Hutu women who were married to Tutsi men; protecting Tutsi people; or who were politically affiliated with the Tutsi. There was also rape of women and girls regardless of ethnicity or affiliation with the Tutsi population, especially against young or beautiful women.<sup>57</sup> These women were primarily attacked because of their gender and the prevailing chaos during the conflict. The perpetrators of the sexual violence were mostly members of the Hutu militia, the *Interahamwe* and military soldiers of the Rwandan Armed Forces (FAR), including the Presidential Guard and civilians.<sup>58</sup> Rwandan women faced various forms of sexual violence including rape; gang rape; sexual slavery; rape by means of objects such as sticks or weapons, often leading to the victims' death; sexual mutilation of breasts and vaginas. Acid was also frequently used to mutilate women to prevent them from having Tutsi children.<sup>59</sup> The rapes and sexual violence took place in all parts of the country. They occurred inside the victims' houses or perpetrators' houses, but more often they were committed in plain view of others, at sites such as schools, churches, roadblocks, government buildings or in the bushes. Indeed, the *Interahamwe* militia often

---

<sup>52</sup> UN Commission on Human Rights, Reports on the situation of Human Rights in Rwanda submitted by Mr René Degni-Séqui, Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights, under paragraph 20 of Resolution S-3/1 of May 1994, E/CN.4/1996/68, 29 January 1996 para 16.

<sup>53</sup> UN Commission on Human Rights

<sup>54</sup> M. McCullum. 1994. p 60.

<sup>55</sup> Alison Des Forges and al. 1999. p 215.

<sup>56</sup> M. McCullum. 1994. p 60.

<sup>57</sup> John Martin. 1995. 12(2): pp 1-3

<sup>58</sup> Hannal, Newbury and Baldwin. 2000. Aftermath: Women in postgenocide Rwanda working paper no 303. p 4.

<sup>59</sup> Hannal Newbury and Baldwin. 2000. p 4.

sexually abused women in public, even in front of their children.<sup>60</sup> Often the bodies of women were, after the rapes, laid spread-eagled in public view.

Considering this kind of violence, the survivors of this brutal treatment have been described as the “living dead”.<sup>61</sup> Their psychological burdens are severe. Women who have been raped in this manner are victims of political struggles and war, yet they are denigrated by society. Their chances of marriage may be destroyed, and some have given birth to children who themselves are scorned. It is estimated that up to 5,000 children have been born because of rape during the genocide.<sup>62</sup> Some women chose not to keep their babies born of rape. Many who decided to keep these children encountered resistance from their families and the local community. The terms used to describe these offspring reflect such reprobation: children of bad memories, devil’s children, and little *interahamwe*.<sup>63</sup> It has been pointed out in the report of Africans Rights Working for justice that:

Women suffered rape as an individual act of aggression against their person, but also an attack upon their community and identity. Some women express their belief that they should have died with their families. Many of them appear vulnerable to a sense of “survivor guilt” although it remains largely unspoken. Moreover rape victims have faced negative reactions from the own relatives and community, especially if their rape resulted in pregnancy.<sup>64</sup>

This quotation portrays the feeling that it is much better for Tutsi women to be killed rather than raped. The massacres kill the bodies while rape kills the souls of human beings. The survivors of violence have been severely traumatised, suffering not only from physical effects of their ordeals, but from deep invisible and psychological wounds.

The exact number of victims of sexual violence during the 1994 genocide will never be fully known, nevertheless, it is clear that the number of women and girls who experienced of sexual violence runs into the thousands. Most of them have been infected with HIV and AIDS as many of them were raped by men who knew they were HIV positive. Therefore, the spread of HIV and AIDS is a consequence of the 1994 genocide and a major cause of poverty

---

<sup>60</sup> McCullum M. 1994. p 28.

<sup>61</sup> Twagiramariya and Turshen (eds). 1998. p 114.

<sup>62</sup> United Nations. 2006. .Information and outreach programme, “The Rwanda Genocide and the United Nations”: Report of the Secretary-General, General Assembly, Sixtieth session, Agenda item 73 (a), A/60/863 p 19.

<sup>63</sup> Twagiramariya and Turshen (eds). 1998. p 113

<sup>64</sup> African Rights Working for Justice, April 2004, p 41.

among Rwandan women. Let us attempt to understand how HIV and AIDS affected women as consequence of the genocide.

### **2.3.2 HIV and AIDS**

As was highlighted above, there are innumerable women who are victims of rape, trauma and physical injuries in Rwanda. As a result, there is a high rate of HIV/AIDS with 66% of women who were raped testing positive.<sup>65</sup> Incidences remain high in a situation of limited health facilities. Thus, this situation had an impact not only on the mental health of women but also on their physical well-being. Additionally, many of those who escaped HIV infection during the genocide were infected through other circumstances.

For instance, migration is known as a major factor in the HIV and AIDS pandemic. During and after the genocide in Rwanda, there was huge migration of people to the neighbouring countries, primarily to the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). Gatwa notes that "...the arrival of more than a million refugees at Goma in Zaire during July 1994 was the largest and swift exodus we have ever witnessed."<sup>66</sup> He emphasises that a further 1, 5 million were internally displaced. In refugee camps women are exposed to rape and sexual violence and unsafe sexual relationship. For this reason women have become more vulnerable as United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) points out that "...refugee women and girls have specific protection problems especially where social structures and values are broken down and where the local authorities lack the capacity to enforce law and order."<sup>67</sup> No doubt, migration has contributed to the spread of HIV and AIDS amongst the Rwandan population.

Additionally, Rwandan society is based on patriarchal structures, and there are many oppressive cultural practices towards women. For instance widows and single women in Rwandan tradition are not counted as persons. Unless one gets married she is not considered as a full human being. In post-genocide Rwanda, some widows were obliged to remarry in order to have a name and be considered. Others had to conform to certain cultural practices in

---

<sup>65</sup> Association des Veuves du Genocide Agahozo.1999. *Etude sur les violences faites aux femmes au Rwanda*. Kigali :AVEGA

<sup>66</sup>Tharcisse Gatwa. 1995. Revivalism and ethnicity: the church in Rwanda. *Transformation* 12(2):4-8.

<sup>67</sup> United nations High Commissioner for Refugees.1995. *The state of World's Refugees. In search of solutions*, New York: Oxford University press Inc. p 59.

order to fit into the community. Isabel Phiri argues that "...the position of African women is made worse with the cultural practice of widow inheritance after the deaths of a husband."<sup>68</sup> Indeed in African tradition in general and in Rwanda in particular, the wife is for the whole community. Therefore, in the absence of the husband the community will take care of the family and provide another man to warm the house. Predominantly this will be one of the brothers-in-law who will be performing the duties of his brother who died or who has immigrated for different reasons. In the case of Rwanda, it includes also prisoners' homes. In connection to this, Phiri states that "...in some cultures, the women who are left behind in the village are also involved in unprotected sex with a chosen person from the village who is supposed to keep the house warm."<sup>69</sup>

Furthermore, Rwandan women are vulnerable to HIV and AIDS due to poverty, domestic violence and gender inequality. They are infected because of the lack of power of control over their bodies and their sexual lives. Traditionally, a Rwandan woman does not have the right to refuse sex to her husband even if she is aware that he is not faithful to her. According to Phiri "... most married women know that their husbands have multiple sex partners but they are powerless to come out of the relationship or negotiate for safe sex."<sup>70</sup> For this reason, as The World Alliance of Reformed Churches states, women are at special risk of HIV and AIDS since they have less control over when, where, whether and how sexual relations take place.<sup>71</sup> Consequently, women are usually disadvantaged both prior to and after their husbands' death. While wives take care of their husbands during AIDS illnesses, in most cases women are abandoned by their husbands and family when they become sick themselves. Women may lose whatever little is left behind by their husband because his relatives may take their possessions.<sup>72</sup> Therefore, power and control in gender relations is a significant contributor to the differential impact of HIV and AIDS on women.

---

<sup>68</sup> Isabel Apawo, Phiri. 2003. "African Women of Faith Speak Out in an HIV/AIDS Era" in , Phiri, Apawo Isabel, Beverley Haddad and Madipoane Masenya, eds. *African women, HIV/AIDS and faith communities*. Pietermaritzburg : Cluster. p 11.

<sup>69</sup> Isabel Apawo, Phiri. 2003. "African Women of Faith Speak Out in an HIV/AIDS Era" in , Phiri, Apawo Isabel, Beverley Haddad and Madipoane Masenya, eds. p 13.

<sup>70</sup> Isabel Apawo, Phiri. 2003. "African Women of Faith Speak Out in an HIV/AIDS Era" in , Phiri, Apawo Isabel, Beverley Haddad and Madipoane Masenya, eds, p 12.

<sup>71</sup> World Alliance of Reformed Churches. 2003, *Created in God's Image: From Hierarchy to Partnership*, Switzerland: WARC. p 138.

<sup>72</sup> World Alliance of Reformed churches researches. 2003. p 136.

As a result of the reasons stated above, in Rwanda HIV and AIDS prevalence among women is estimated at 11,3 percent against 10,8 percent for men. About seventy percent of the surviving women in Rwanda are estimated to have been infected with HIV.<sup>73</sup> Today, in the absence of sufficient anti-retroviral (ARV) drugs and proper food, they are dying of AIDS in large numbers.

HIV and AIDS come together with poverty as social problems; one cannot differentiate between the two. Poverty contributes to HIV and AIDS and HIV and AIDS contributes to poverty. The absence of alternative opportunities to earn a livelihood for themselves and their households pushes many girls and young women into commercial sex, whether openly or discreetly in order to survive. This increases the HIV and AIDS infection among women.<sup>74</sup> In the next section I will discuss how the genocide has affected women economically and has catapulted them into situations of poverty.

### ***2.3.3 Economic Loss***

When people talk about the genocide in Rwanda, they primarily focus on the massacres of innocent persons but it has other aspects. The Rwandan economy was shaken during the genocide, when human capital and resources were destroyed. It resulted in the complete destruction of property, especially the property belonging to Tutsi victims. During the massacres most victims left their homes and went to seek refuge in what they believed to be safer places such as churches, hospitals, homes of friends and the bush. The perpetrators had taken everything which belonged to the victims, especially valuable resources such as money, contents of the houses, crops and domestic animals. The victims' houses were not only pillaged but were also destroyed beyond repair.<sup>75</sup>

The impact of cattle being taken away should be understood in the Rwandan traditional context where cows symbolised the wealth of people. Throughout the history of Rwanda, cows have been portrayed as a symbol of Tutsi invasion, conquest, and social and political domination over other groups. Therefore, whenever Rwanda experienced ethnic clashes,

---

<sup>73</sup> [http://www.aidscompetence.org/content/projects/6\\_cnls\\_rwanda.htm](http://www.aidscompetence.org/content/projects/6_cnls_rwanda.htm) accessed on 20th August 2009.

<sup>74</sup> Daniela Gennrich. 2004. *The Church in an HIV+ World. A practical Handbook*. Pietermaritzburg: Cluster. p 39.

<sup>75</sup> Repubulika y'u Rwanda. 1999. *Ubumwe bw'abanyarwanda*, Kigali. p 18.

cows were also targeted in order to wipe out the icon of Tutsi power and pride. In 1994 the same phenomenon happened. All over the country, the perpetrators were determined to slaughter all cows belonging to the Tutsi. Other livestock such as goats, sheep and even chickens were also slaughtered and roasted as well. Theoneste Rutayisire states that "...the loss of livestock had large impact on the economic and social life of genocide survivors including widows."<sup>76</sup> After the genocide, widows found themselves without anything to help them, since they lost human resources and material. The next section addresses the resulting new roles and responsibilities women face in post-genocide Rwanda.

### ***2.3.4 The New Roles and Responsibilities***

The 1994 genocide has caused many women to face the challenges of new roles and new responsibilities. Widows of the genocide, women whose husbands are in prison, and teenage girls heading households are particularly vulnerable. In such conditions, women have had to assume responsibility for activities previously carried out by men or by a husband and wife together.<sup>77</sup> Indeed rural women have long participated actively in cultivating food and cash crops. Nevertheless, they normally relied on men to build and repair the house, track household finances, devise income-earning strategies, tend the banana grove, and care for cattle.<sup>78</sup> Thus, where men are absent in post-genocide Rwanda, rural women have had to take over such activities. In urban areas, women find it particularly challenging to secure rights to housing, obtain resources for rent, and find employment or other income-earning activities.<sup>79</sup> Before the 1994 genocide, women did not work as day labourers on construction sites. This has now become a common sight in towns and even in rural area.

Additionally, the widows and single women often do not have adequate access to land. In customary legal practices in Rwanda, girls usually did not inherit land from their fathers; when a woman married, her husband was expected to provide her with land to cultivate to meet the needs of her husband, their children, and herself.<sup>80</sup> When a husband died, his widow was supposed to be allowed to remain on the husband's land, holding it in trust for her

---

<sup>76</sup> Theoneste Rutayisire. 2005. Christian response to human need: a case study of ministry by Christian NGOs to genocide widows in Kigali-Ville Province-Rwanda, Masters Thesis. Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal, School of Religion and Theology. p 45.

<sup>77</sup> Christopher Taylor. 1999. p 58.

<sup>78</sup> Christopher Taylor. 1999. p 60.

<sup>79</sup> Hannal Newbury and Baldwin. 2000. p 6.

<sup>80</sup> Twagiramariya and Turshen (eds). 1998. p 120.



male children, and levirate marriage<sup>81</sup> was sometimes practiced. If there were no children, the permission for a widow to stay on her husband's land depended on the goodwill of her late husband's kin.<sup>82</sup> However, with the new roles and responsibilities, and with a large percentage of households headed by women, women have become assertive representatives for their communities, bringing concerns and demands to the attention of local authorities, including concerns such as land inheritance and ownership of their husband properties.<sup>83</sup>

These new responsibilities that women hold needed to be combined with building the new social relationship between families and friends. Kubai highlights that in "...Rwanda as in many other conflict situations, the communities were in the front line. Neighbours were killing neighbours and friends and in-laws turned each others' killers."<sup>84</sup> Therefore, in the context of genocide, it was not only individuals who were targeted for elimination but also the broader systems of identity and social relations present within communities. The Rwandan crisis has always been understood as an ethnic conflict between the Hutu and Tutsi, but in reality the crisis has had wide ranging social implications.

All ethnic groups in Rwanda share one culture, one language and the same traditions. Therefore intermarriage between the Hutu and the Tutsi was and is still frequent. This makes the situation complex because it makes interethnic strife in Rwanda hard to understand. The process of rebuilding social relationship will went slowly. Neighbours, relatives, in-laws and spouses rose against one another and to some extent children against parents. For instance there were some cases where in intermarriages the husbands killed their wives and their families. In the aftermath, these people are accused by their children and they are put in jail. Consequently, the genocide tragedy has left serious social divisions among Rwandan society and among families themselves. The study done by Christian Aid also notes that:

A Tutsi woman whose husband and family were Hutus may be hated by his family if they are extreme Hutus who were involved in the Genocide and if she has any remaining Tutsi family they may see her as a traitor or a threat. A Hutu woman who has married a Tutsi man, who has been killed, may be hated by her husband's Tutsi family and also may be seen as a Hutu extremist.<sup>85</sup>

---

<sup>81</sup> It is a marriage in which a man marries his deceased brother's wife

<sup>82</sup> Twagiramariya and Turshen (eds). 1998. p 121.

<sup>83</sup> Hannal. Newbury and Baldwin. 2000. p 15.

<sup>84</sup> Anne Nkirote, Kubai. 2008. "Living in the Shadow of genocide: Women and HIV/AIDS in Rwanda" in Hings, Teresia M., Anne Nkirote Kubai, Philomena Njeri Mwaura and Hazel Ayanga, Eds. Women, religion and HIV/AIDS in Africa : Responding to ethical and theological challenges. Pietermaritzburg: Cluster. p 56.

<sup>85</sup> Evans, Treasure Georginas. 2003 p 18.

Rwandan women, either Hutu or Tutsi, carry all the complications and burden of the Rwandan situation. Furthermore their spirituality was extremely affected since most question the presence of God and the Church of Christ during the genocide. In the next section, I focus on the important question of the genocide's effects on women's spirituality and their faith in God.

### ***2.3.5 Faith and Spirituality Affected***

While the negative health, economic and social impacts of genocide on women are enormous, the researcher cannot omit to point out how Rwandan women's faith and spirituality has been affected by the 1994 genocide.

The genocide tragedies happened when Rwanda was regarded as one of the most Christian countries in Africa and the world. Statistically speaking eighty to ninety percent of the population regard themselves as Christians with an absolute majority of Roman Catholics, and a strong minority Protestants.<sup>86</sup> However, the predominance of Christianity did not stop the Christian Church from being involved in the genocide.

The close relationship between state and Church in Rwanda has existed since the period of the missionaries. The first Catholic missionaries came around 1900 almost at the same time as the German colonisers. Their first mission stations in Rwanda were established by the Society of Our Lady of Africa, commonly known as the White Fathers.<sup>87</sup> Bishop Lavigèrie, the founder of the Order, promoted the idea that to implant Christianity successfully in a society; missionaries should focus their conversion efforts first and foremost on political authorities. According to him, if the chiefs and kings could be convinced to adopt Christianity, their subjects would naturally follow.<sup>88</sup> Therefore, this relationship drove the church to be very involved in political affairs. The missionaries played a primary role in creating ethnic myths and interpreting the Rwandan social organization, not only for colonial administrators, but ultimately for the Rwandan population itself.<sup>89</sup>

---

<sup>86</sup> Patrick Johnstone. 1993. *Operation World*. Carlisle, UK:OM Publishing. p 472.

<sup>87</sup> Roger Bowen. 1996. Rwanda-Missionary reflections on a catastrophe. *Anvil* 13(1). p 35.

<sup>88</sup> Ian Linden. 1977. *Church and Revolution in Rwanda*. New York: Africana Publishing Company. p 17.

<sup>89</sup> Tharcisse Gatwa. 1995. Revivalism and ethnicity: the church in Rwanda. *Transformation* 12(2):4-8.

In the past, churches had been places of refuge for those threatened with violence.<sup>90</sup> Conversely, in 1994, Churches became chambers of death, and perpetrators of the massacres. People who sought sanctuary in church buildings were instead slaughtered there. According to some estimates, more people were killed in church buildings than anywhere else.<sup>91</sup> Numerous Tutsi priests, pastors, brothers, and nuns were killed, often by their own parishioners, sometimes by their fellow clergy. Many Christians clearly believed that in participating in the massacre of Tutsi, they were doing the will of the Church since the Church leaders were very involved in genocide events. In a number of cases, people apparently stopped in their process of massacring people to pray at the Church altar. People came to mass each day to pray, and then they went out to kill.<sup>92</sup> Sadly, during the genocide, they could preach a message that supported what they were doing. Some priests and pastors went further saying that God gave the Tutsis to be killed. To illustrate this John Martin notes that:

There is no escape from the truth that the Christian Church has been a major player in the tragic events in Rwanda which have horrified observers throughout the world in 1994. Churches have been the scenes of massacres and the church leaders have acquiesced to hideous cruelty.<sup>93</sup>

The fact that the Christian Church leaders in Rwanda supported the perpetrators' regime and practiced injustice and oppression, instead of playing the prophetic role, has tested what they stand for. Consequently, after the genocide, observers and Rwandans themselves have asked many questions about Rwandan spirituality and Christian morality. John Martin asks, "So how is it that a Christian country deeply affected by revival should have perpetrated a holocaust of ethnic purification in the same league as the former Yugoslavia?"<sup>94</sup>

Women's spirituality was astonished by the church leaders' behaviours during the tragedies and their position at the forefront of the genocide. They were shocked to see the Church failing its mission in the difficult contexts of pain and misery. As a result, after the genocide, some have stopped attending the Church and have become complete unbelievers.<sup>95</sup> Those who were spiritually committed moved from their original denominations to new independent

---

<sup>90</sup> M. McCullum. 1994. p 68.

<sup>91</sup> Antoine Rutayisire. 1995. p 15.

<sup>92</sup> Antoine Rutayisire. 1995 .p 16.

<sup>93</sup> John Martin. 1995. pp 1-3.

<sup>94</sup> John Martin. 1995. pp. 1-3.

<sup>95</sup> Theoneste Rutayisire 2005. p 63.

denominations that started after genocide. Few remain as adherents to their ancient denominations. They are Christians who ask questions such as “...where God was during our suffering? And why did God allow the genocide to happen?”

These questions and various observations show how the spirituality of the Rwandans has been affected, particularly the women survivors. It challenges the Christian Church after the genocide tragedies. Rutayisire Theoneste argues that “...unless these questions are adequately addressed, genocide survivors would not feel part of the same body of the Christ again.”<sup>96</sup> Nevertheless, Schaeffer argues that “...by God’s grace, upon the basis of the work of substantial healing can be a reality here and now.”<sup>97</sup> Indeed by God’s grace the Christian Church in Rwanda has risen. With these tremendous challenges, it carries out God’s mission in the world.

## **2.4 Conclusion**

As discussed in this chapter, the 1994 genocide has had an enormous effect on the Rwandan community, primarily women. In addition to losing their husbands, children, relatives and friends, they lost their property which impoverished their living condition. Indeed, women survivors have lost personal confidence and confidence in relationships. Many suffered the indignity of rape and gang rape. The sexual violence was incomparable to any other conflict in the world as it was perpetrated purposely. Most of the rape victims are now HIV positive, either fighting for their lives or suffering from social stigma attached to the disease. The horrific event of the April 1994 genocide has damaged the image of God in women and has deeply affected the spirituality of the victims. Nonetheless, most of them and their offenders still claim to be Christians whatever it means to them.

Fifteen years after the genocide, women still suffer from its consequences. However, besides all the struggles women face, they play a significant role in rebuilding the country as individuals and as members of a broad spectrum of associations at local and national level. As Reddock points out, women perform the vast majority of the world’s domestic labour,

---

<sup>96</sup> Theoneste Rutayisire.2005. p 63.

<sup>97</sup> Francis schaeffer and U.Middlemann. 1992. *Pollution and the Death of Man*, Wheaton, Illinois, Crossway Books. p 66.

providing care and food, growing crops and turning this into food for consumption.<sup>98</sup> Women need to be fully empowered and supported in carrying out these essential functions.

The next chapter will examine how and why the Presbyterian Church in Rwanda, as an agent of transformation, has engaged in empowering women for their sustainable livelihoods.

---

<sup>98</sup> Rhoda Reddock. 2000, "Why Gender? Why Development? In Parpart, JL, Cornelly MP and Barriteach VE. *Theoretical Perspectives on Gender and Development*, Ottawa: IDRC. p 43.

## CHAPTER THREE

### THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH ENGAGEMENT IN WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT

#### 3.1 Introduction

The previous chapter looked at the impact of the 1994 genocide on women. It showed how Rwandan women have been affected deeply by the events of the genocide. After the genocide, the country is rebuilding from the ashes, aspiring to become a prosperous nation which has vanquished poverty and misery. As the majority of the Rwandan population are women, they have become a driving force behind the socio-economic development of the country after the 1994 genocide. John Wesley Kabango for instance notes that "...many women are heading households because their husbands were killed or are in prison."<sup>99</sup> Consequently, it is impossible to discuss development in Rwanda without including women.

The purpose of this chapter is to analyse the engagement of the Presbyterian Church in empowering women and as an agent of social transformation. From the time that the Presbyterian Church was established in Rwanda, it has been involved in various development projects. However, today it is facing serious challenges as a consequence of the genocide, where it has not only to empower women socially and spiritually but also economically, so that they can rise from death. In its vision and practice of empowering women, the Presbyterian Church is contributing to the realization of life in its fullness - the mission of Jesus towards God's people.

This chapter's discussion will focus on women, poverty and its causes. It will analyse the theological motivation for the church to engage in women's empowerment and responses to poverty. Bryant Myers makes an apt comment on the response to poverty which is significant to our study:

The way we understand poverty and its causes tends to shape how we respond to poverty and what we think poverty eradication looks like. If our understanding of poverty focuses on its

---

<sup>99</sup> John Wesley. 2002. "case study Church-based Rural Development: RDIS, Rwanda" in Tim Chester, *Justice, Mercy and Humility Integral Mission and the Poor*. Carlisle: Paternoster Press. p 168.

material manifestations, so does our response. If our understanding of poverty and its causes is social or cultural, then response tends to focus on changing social structures or addressing cultural causes of poverty.<sup>100</sup>

Before we examine how the Church is responding to poverty and empowering women, it is important to understand the nature of poverty and its causes among Rwandan women.

### 3.2 Women and Poverty

Poverty is a complex term. Johann Graaff puts it in this way “... it has economic, political, cultural, emotional, and psychological dimensions. It means people suffer many more wounds than just physical, and it means that poverty is a state of vulnerability.”<sup>101</sup> Indeed, poverty implies different things to different people, according to place, age, group and gender. It can result from people having limited access to basic necessities such as food, health care and education. Poverty can also mean unequal access to resources, opportunities and benefits as well as positions of power and decision-making.<sup>102</sup> Additionally, poverty can mean greater vulnerability to women and can result in poor self-esteem, a sense of powerlessness and violence.<sup>103</sup> Furthermore, Narayan defines it as holistic:

Poor people’s definitions of well being are holistic. That is, the good life is seen as multidimensional, with both material and psychological dimensions. It includes a dependable livelihood, peace of mind, good health, and belonging to community. It encompasses safety, freedom of choice and action, food, and care of family and spirit. It is life with dignity’.<sup>104</sup>

Various studies illustrate how poverty affects more women than men. There is the tendency for poverty to be over-represented amongst women, in what Jaap Bogaards refers to as the “feminisation of poverty”.<sup>105</sup> He uses the United National Development Program statistics to

---

<sup>100</sup> Bryant L. Myers. 2000. *Walking with the Poor principles and practices of Transformation development*. Maryknoll, Orbis Books. p 64.

<sup>101</sup> Johann Graaff. (ed.) 2001. *Poverty and development: Introduction to Sociology*, Cape Town: Oxford Press Southern Africa. p 8.

<sup>102</sup> Leonard Boff, and C. 1987. *Introducing Liberation Theology*. Tunbridge Wells : Burns & Oates. p 69.

<sup>103</sup> World Alliance of Reformed churches researches. 2003. p 108.

<sup>104</sup> Narayan D. 2001. “Voices of the Poor” in D. Belshaw, R. Calderisi and C. Sugden (eds) *Faith in Development: Partnership between the World Bank and the Churches of Africa*, Oxford: Regnum p 40.

<sup>105</sup> Jaap Bogaards. 1996. “Challenges for Tear Fund Holland in the Twenty-First Century” in *Transformation An international Evangelical Dialogue on Mission and Ethics*, 13/ 4 (October/December). p 37.

illustrate that "...two third of the world's illiterate are women, 70 percent of the world's poor are women and women earn 30-40% less than men for the same work."<sup>106</sup>

It is not accidental that women are poor; it is because of unequal power relationship. "Poverty marginalizes the majority of women and denies them the right to a decent standard of living."<sup>107</sup> Myers argues that "...women and girls receive less schooling; have poorer nutrition, and receive less health care."<sup>108</sup> Women are denied access to resources by partners with a greater economic power within the household. The question of how resources are allocated is complex and delicate. "...it is not only denial or allocation of material resources but also the responsibility, stress and threat of denial which complicates the life of individual household..." writes Sarah Payne.<sup>109</sup> Therefore, poverty affects more women, and in different ways than it affects men.

### **3.3 The Causes of Poverty Among Rwandan Women**

Despite the 1994 genocide that destroyed human and material resources and impoverished Rwandan women's condition of living, the causes of poverty among women in Rwanda are multiple. The following are some of the identified factors in women's vulnerability.

#### ***3.3.1 Patriarchal Culture***

According to Denise Ackermann, the term patriarchy describes "...the legal, economic and social system, which validates and enforces the sovereignty of the male head of the family over its other members."<sup>110</sup> She emphasises that in a patriarchal system, wives, children, workers and slaves are subordinate to the male heads of families, tribes and societies. Therefore today, patriarchy describes the male-dominated world we live in.<sup>111</sup> Haddad relates this domination to many states in the world where the discrimination against women is done by implementing laws and traditions which are biased in favour of patriarchal power

---

<sup>106</sup> Jaap, Bogaards. 1996. p 7.

<sup>107</sup> World Alliance of Reformed churches researches. 2003. p 108.

<sup>108</sup> Bryant Myers. 1999. 57.

<sup>109</sup> Sarah Payne. 1991. *Women, health and poverty: An introduction*, Harvester British. p13.

<sup>110</sup> Denise Ackermann. 1991. "Being Woman, Being Human" (93-105) in Ackermann, D. and draper, J.A. and Masinini, E. (eds) *Women Hold Up Half the Sky: Women in the Church in Southern Africa*. Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications. p 95.

<sup>111</sup> Denise Ackermann. 1991. p 95.



structures.<sup>112</sup> For this reason women become vulnerable because in many circumstances they lose control over resources and they depend on men. Momsen points out that in some countries ...”women cannot do paid work or travel without their husband’s or father’s permission.”<sup>113</sup> In the same way Nhlanhla Jordan states the Marxist feminists’ perspective on patriarchal modes of production.

In the patriarchal mode of production effective possession of the means of household-based production is monopolised by a class of patriarchs who are socially recognised as heads of household and/or extended family production units.<sup>114</sup>

The above quotation portrays how the patriarchal system creates dependency. Most women do not have access to the means of production including land, tools, and cattle and they definitely do not have access to monetary income, food and shelter. Therefore, they depend on their husbands, fathers, brothers and sons, which drives them into vulnerable situation. In connection to this, Haddad sees poverty as “...generally characterised by the inability of individuals, households or entire communities to command sufficient resources to satisfy a social acceptable minimum standard of living.”<sup>115</sup> She continues that because of the lack of these basic means of survival and because most economic resources have been monopolised by men, poverty pushes many young women into illiteracy and dependency.<sup>116</sup> Therefore, gender inequality forces women into poverty, marginalises and denies them the rights to a decent standard of living.

In connection with the above understanding of the patriarchal system, Rwanda is characterised by a social structure that underlies the unequal social power relations between men and women. Hence, women have been victims of this inequality, which is founded on culture, and enforced by religious beliefs, myths and taboos. Zuckerman states that patriarchal socialisation has dehumanised women in Rwanda. Most of them think, act, behave and react as second-class citizens in the church and in the community.<sup>117</sup> As a result, there is unequal access to power and opportunities for decision-making. Traditionally Rwandan

---

<sup>112</sup> Beverley Haddad. 2000. African Women’s Theology of Survival: Intersecting Faith, Feminism and Development. Unpublished PhD Thesis: University of Natal. pp. 97-98.

<sup>113</sup> Janet Henshall, Momsen. 2004. *Gender and development*. London: Routledge. p 2.

<sup>114</sup> Nhlanhla Jordan. 1994. The informal sector: Its historical context for African women. *Women’s Studies* 6, 26-39. p 28.

<sup>115</sup> Beverley Haddad. 2003. “Gender, Development, and Faith: The church and women’s struggle to survive”, *Missionalia*, 31(3) p 440.

<sup>116</sup> Beverley Haddad. 2003. p 440.

<sup>117</sup> Elaine Zuckerman. 2001. Why Engendering PRSPs Reduces Poverty and the case of Rwanda. World Institute for Development Economics Research Discussion paper No 2001/112.

society defined a girl child as being of less importance. Discrimination among Rwandan parents is real; when the family does not have enough money to educate the children, they prefer to educate the boys to the girls, thinking that to educate girls is a waste of money since they will get married and leave the family - as if to get married is to die.<sup>118</sup> Even those who go to school, especially in rural areas, often do not attend school as they stay at home to attend to household needs.

Consequently, women and girls have had limited access to education compared to men and boys, and this increases poverty among them. Moreover, women are regarded as weak physically and intellectually whilst men are identified as strong, courageous, responsible, daring, decisive and self-assured. Rakoczy points out that:

In Kinyarwanda, the word for a man is *umugabo* which can be used to refer to someone who is courageous, responsible, daring, decisive and self-assured. The word for woman however is *umugore* which has just the opposite meaning. The Banyarwanda use this term in derogatory context: *ibitekerezo by'abagore* ( women's ideas of no value).<sup>119</sup>

In the light of the above quotation, women are counted as children; they are silenced and, have no rights to express themselves. The sayings like “*nta jambo ry'abagore*” meaning that women do not have a significant word to say are common among men. In some tribes women are not allowed to walk or sit together with men in public spaces. Moreover, women and girl children are not authorised to eat at the same table with men including their husbands. Such men would rather prefer to eat with their male children than their wives. This emphasises the dependence of women on their husbands; she does not have her own religion and tribe. From the day of the wedding, a woman loses her identity and becomes one of her husband's belongings. Payne argues that man has thought of himself as the mover and giver; women on the other hand, are considered as recipients.<sup>120</sup>

Payne indeed notes that “...women perceive economic dependence on men through the operation of a sexual division of labour in which a woman's position is defined as primarily domestic and only secondary in terms of the labour market.”<sup>121</sup> A wife is considered as property of the husband. Therefore she is not free to engage in any income generating

---

<sup>118</sup> Ministry of Gender and women's empowerment. 2003. *National Policy* Kigali: MIGEPROFE. p 16.

<sup>119</sup> Susan Rackoczy. 2004. *In Her Name: Women Doing Theology*. Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications. p 36.

<sup>120</sup> Sarah Payne. 1991. *Women, Health and Poverty: An introduction*, Harvester British. p 14.

<sup>121</sup> Sarah Payne. 1991. p 42.

activities. For instance, although women in Rwanda play greater roles in agriculture, with ninety-three percent of farmers being women, the imbalances in the traditional male-female power relations make it more difficult for women to own land and have access and control over other assets such as fertilizer, seeds, pesticides, credit and extension services.<sup>122</sup> All these inequalities, coupled with women's unbalanced status, lead to women having limited access to and control over economic opportunities. Not only has the culture of the society which denies women's humanity but also religious tradition aggravated it as we will see in the next paragraph.

### **3.3.2 Christian Tradition**

Ogundipe Molaru argues that "Christianity is itself a very male-dominated religion".<sup>123</sup> The United Nations Beijing Conference stated that "...the origin of the discrimination is sometimes religion, beliefs cultural traditions or political interests".<sup>124</sup> Moreover, Rakoczy emphasises that women's discrimination is rooted in the Christian tradition. She notes that "the Fathers of the early centuries of Christianity described women as the cause of sin".<sup>125</sup> They described women as the source of sin and evil. With reference to the mind-body dualism, Greek philosophy relates men with spirit which is higher and better, while female is lower because of being associated with earthly desires which distract them from spiritual matter.<sup>126</sup> In this regard, Hinga building on the work Ruether cites the work of Thomas Aquinas who presented the view that women are malformed males and therefore constitute the abnormal half of human species.<sup>127</sup> Indeed, Slee notes that subordination was read out of the Genesis myth from two motifs in the story. First, because Eve was created second, out of Adam's rib, it was argued that she is naturally subordinate to her origin and source. Second, the woman is to be subordinate to the man as a result of and a punishment for her sin, and, at

---

<sup>122</sup> Ministry of Gender and women's empowerment. 2003. *National Policy* Kigali: MIGEPROFE. p 17.

<sup>123</sup> Lisie Molaru Ogundipe. 1994. *Recreating ourselves: African Women and Critical Transformation*. Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press. p 31.

<sup>124</sup> United Nations. 1996. *The Beijing Declaration and The Platform for Action: Fourth World Conference on Women Beijing, China 4-15 September 1995*. New York : Department of Public Information. p121.

<sup>125</sup> Susan Rakoczy. 2004. p 30.

<sup>126</sup> Susan Rakoczy. 2004. p 33.

<sup>127</sup> Teresia M. Hinga. 1992. "Jesus Christ and Liberation of Women in African" in Odoyoye M.A. and Kanyoro M.R., eds. *The will to Arise: women tradition and the church in Africa*. Maryknoll: Orbis. p 183.

the same time as her own path to salvation. He goes on arguing that this kind of theology had already taken root in the New Testament period especially in the Pastoral Epistles.<sup>128</sup>

Thus, Christianity's traditional interpretation is based on early church teachings, where a man is created in the image of God while a woman is in her husband's image. Consequently men abuse and oppress women in many ways. The exclusive language is used in the church and other public places as if women are not part of the audience. Furthermore, women are denied prominent roles in church such as in ordained ministry. The study and practice of theology has been dominated almost by men. In connection to this the World Alliance Reformed Church notes that:

The space that women occupy in the church is often perceived to be an extension of their home life. 'Women are generally responsible for the cleaning and decoration of church buildings, preparing and serving meals and snacks, teaching children in Sunday school, fundraising and charity. Men are primarily occupied in mainstream ecclesiastical activities.'<sup>129</sup>

Like many other churches in Africa, the Presbyterian Church in Rwanda traditionally has marginalised women by considering them as inferior to men even though the majority of its members are women. Musimbi Kanyoro states "Although the majority of church members are women, the relationship between women and the church is contradictory."<sup>130</sup> On one hand, the church is happy to have a large number of women. On the other hand, women tend to be marginalised within the church structures. This is emphasised that both Rwandan culture and Christianity prevents women from playing leadership in our society and church. Both cultures have been influenced to an extent by the western culture which was patriarchal dominated.

### ***3.3.3 Capitalist System***

Buckley indicates that capitalism is the second framework that fosters oppression of women. Capitalism, explains Buckley is "...an economic system based on the competitive market,

---

<sup>128</sup> Daniel L. Migliore.1991. Faith seeking understanding: An introduction to Christian theology. WB Eerdmans: Michigan.: Publishing Company, Grand Rapids p 37.

<sup>129</sup> World Alliance of Reformed Churches . 2003. p 18.

<sup>130</sup> Musimbi Kanyoro (ed), 1997. *In search of a Round Table: Gender, Theology & Church Leadership*. Geneva: World Council of Churches. p 176.

and therefore aims at an ever-expanding technology and the maximisation of production.”<sup>131</sup> Miguez Boanino indeed, notes that “...the evolution of local and global economic systems has resulted today in a world of economic injustice where a small group of people have much more than it needs and majority have too little to meet their needs.”<sup>132</sup> This is influenced by economic globalisation driven by competitiveness between companies and countries. It is characterised by trade, globalisation, capital markets and the rapid diffusion of science and technologies which penetrate the lives of human beings at such a fast rate that life is no longer natural but of a ‘techno-nature’.<sup>133</sup>

Essentially, in the capitalist system, the economy decides everything. This enriches the owners of industries while making the worker dependent and vulnerable.<sup>134</sup> Capitalism creates subordination and its corporations are organised on strictly hierarchical lines. Capitalism and patriarchy relate to each other. Jordan states that “Marxist feminists suggest that capitalism has afforded men the opportunity to own women as their properties and for the women to be economically dependent on men.”<sup>135</sup>

Relating capitalism to Rwandan women’s contexts, due to low education levels and lack of skills, most women cannot compete with men for good jobs. As a result, they are left behind with a low income. Indeed most women are working in informal sectors where they earn little. These include street vending of fruits, vegetables, raw and cooked meat, selling second hand clothes and crafts. Most of this type of business is conducted in hidden places in the evening because street vending is not authorised in Rwanda. If detected by the police and local security, they are not only punished, they could also lose what they are selling. Jordan argues that street-food vending is one of the most visible activities of the informal sector. It is also usually one of the most harassed by local officials.<sup>136</sup> He continues his argument that although the informal sector is increasingly concentrated in low income and low productivity activities, it is common among women.

---

<sup>131</sup>M.I. Buckley. 1984. “Women , Poverty, and economic justice” (3-10) in Kalven, J and Buckley, M. I. (eds) *Women’s Spirit Bonding*. New York: Pilgrim press. p 7.

<sup>132</sup> Miguez Jose Boanino. 1983. *Toward a Christian Political Ethics*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press. p 13.

<sup>133</sup> Miguez Jose Boanino. 1983. p 14.

<sup>134</sup> M.I. Buckley. 1984. p 7.

<sup>135</sup> Nhlanhla Jordan. 1994. p 29.

<sup>136</sup> Nhlanhla Jordan. 1994. p 31.

Most Rwandan women who join the informal sector for street trade are young women, most of whom are widows, single mothers and orphans. They are found within poor communities populated by people with little education - those who are struggling to make a living for themselves and their families.<sup>137</sup> Rural women's work is hardly recognised. Their subsistence farming is not counted as a great contribution to the development of the nation and yet without it life in Rwanda would stop.

Zuckerman supports Jordan's argument in emphasising that street vending is one sector which allows women to fulfil their various functions as wives, mothers and income earners.<sup>138</sup> Haddad cites Boserup in arguing that because women's work is around home subsistence farming and the informal sector, it was not taken into account by the experts in their development policies, planning and activities as they intend only to consider the formal economy.<sup>139</sup> In the same way Winnie Byanyima reports that

The cost of reproducing and maintaining a labour force in society remains invisible, because of unpaid work that women do to raise the future labour force does not count as an economic activity. Raising children, cooking, cleaning, looking after husbands, constitute unaccounted work for that keeps women away from going out to earn money.<sup>140</sup>

In the light of this quotation Byanyima insists that in determining resource allocations, such as when planning the budget, the likely gender impacts should be taken into account, especially when women's caring work has an effect not just in the household but in the overall economy. "Policies that seem to increase efficiency in the formal economy may just be a transfer of responsibilities to women in the households."<sup>141</sup>

### ***3.3.4 Women Themselves***

As a result of oppression, humiliation and dehumanisation, women imbibe a negative self-image. Leslie Ogundipe says that the African woman has "six mountains" on her back and one of them is 'herself'. She describes that "...women are shackled by their own negative self-image, by centuries of the internalisation of the ideologies of patriarchy and gender

---

<sup>137</sup> Nhlanhla Jordan. 1994. p 31.

<sup>138</sup> Elaine Zuckerman. 1998. p 31.

<sup>139</sup> Beverley Haddad. 2000. p 113.

<sup>140</sup> Winnie Byanyima. 2008. "Celebrating Constitutional Achievement and Stepping up to the future, conference report, Kigali: World Bank. p 42.

<sup>141</sup> Winnie Byanyima. 2008. p 42.

hierarchy.”<sup>142</sup> Similarly, Rwandan women have been socialised to believe that they are not capable, are inferior, and only men can decide for them what to do. They react with fear, dependency and complexes. For this reason most times they do not support their fellow women when they try to arise from the oppression.

Rakoczy considers this kind of idea as a particular manifestation of women’s sin. She says that women do evil in the family household when mothers insist on following traditions even if are harmful to themselves and their daughters.<sup>143</sup> She goes on to explain that at workplaces, some “...women cannot support one another because of obsessive need to compete with one another is much stronger than any deep-seated desire for solidarity.”<sup>144</sup> In order to denounce evil because it reinforces patriarchal oppression Rakoczy encourages women’s solidarity since one woman’s voice is not enough.<sup>145</sup> Equally, Nyambura notes:

The struggle is hard because women, too, are not free from the vices that discriminate against women. We, too, become greedy for power, money and status; too can exercise domination, control and exclusion, just like our brothers. For a long time we have internalised an inferiority complex and it will require hard work to overcome it. That is why we need to work in solidarity, affirm one another and identify our own weaknesses so as to empower one another.<sup>146</sup>

Oduyoye as well notes that the way women are viewed in the church is found not only among men but among women too. “Often one finds that African women have so internalised this low esteem of women in the Church and other prevailing values that they become participants in the suppression of their own gender.”<sup>147</sup> Likewise, Freire points out “self-depreciation” which derives from poor people’s internalisation of the opinion the oppressors hold of them.<sup>148</sup> According to him poor people become convinced of their own unfitness by believing what they have been told about themselves as being ignorant, inferior, sinner, lazy, incapable of learning anything. He emphasises that these things lead them to distrust themselves.<sup>149</sup> Freire contends that the oppressed have been destroyed precisely because their situation has

---

<sup>142</sup> Leslie Morola Ogundipe. 1994. p 28.

<sup>143</sup> Susan Rakoczy. 2004. p, 265.

<sup>144</sup> Susan Rakoczy. 2004. p 265.

<sup>145</sup> Susan, Rakoczy. 2004. p 270.

<sup>146</sup> Nyambura. Njoroge. 1996. “Groaning and languishing in Labour Pains” in Kanyoro, M.R. and Njoroge. eds. *Groaning in Faith : African women in the household of God*. Nairobi : Action publishers. p 13.

<sup>147</sup> Mercy Amba, Oduyoye. 2001. *Introducing African women’s theology*. Sheffield: Academic Press. p 81.

<sup>148</sup> Freire, Paulo. 1996. p 45.

<sup>149</sup> Freire, Paulo. 1996. p 45.

reduced them to things.<sup>150</sup> In this situation, all they need is freedom. Thus, Mary Daly suggests that "...for women to achieve their freedom, they will need to cultivate confidence in themselves such that their actions spring from themselves, rather than being motivated by imitation of any role models."<sup>151</sup>

### 3.4 Theological Motivation

The previous discussion highlighted how women are oppressed and marginalised by patriarchal structures. Consequently, they lose humanity and dignity and are counted among those who do not matter in society. Actually the world tends to view poor people as a group that is helpless, and invites us to treat them as objects of our compassion, as a thing to which we can do what we believe is best.

Nevertheless, God knows them and loves them and through His son Jesus Christ he promised them life in its fullness. Therefore, the role of the Church is to commit to life against death. Myers indicates that "...our point of departure for a Christian understanding of poverty is to remember that the poor are people with names, people to whom God has given gifts, and people with whom and among whom God has been working before we even know they are there."<sup>152</sup> Gustavo Gutierrez notes that "...the poor merit preferential attention, whatever may be the moral or personal situation in which they find themselves."<sup>153</sup> Thus, the poor are blessed not because they are the poor, but because the Kingdom of God is expressed in the manifestation of His justice and love in their favour.<sup>154</sup> For this reason the privilege of the poor and marginalised has a theological basis. In the next paragraphs, I examine theological insights that can motivate the Church to deal with questions of women's empowerment.

---

<sup>150</sup> Freire 1996. p 50.

<sup>151</sup> Mary Dary 1973. *Beyond God the Father*. Boston, Mass : Beacom Press. 69.

<sup>152</sup> Bryant Myers. 1999. p 58.

<sup>153</sup> Gustavo Guetierrez. 1983. "Liberation of the poor: The Puebla Persepective" in *The power of the Poor in History*. London : SCM. p 138.

<sup>154</sup> Gustavo Gutierrez. 1983. p 159.



### ***3.4.1 God and Gender Justice***

Human justice is the concern of God from the time of Israel. God is against injustice and exploitation of God's people. God loves human beings on equal basis. God has a plan for humanity. God demands justice, brotherhood and sisterhood among God's children.

According to the first creation narrative in Genesis 1: 26-27; God created women and men equally. There is no mention of hierarchy of superiority or inferiority. There is a relationship between man and woman. We are simply told that male and female together constitute the image of God and both have been given the same stewardship responsibilities over God's creation. So human beings are to live in partnership in order to fulfil these responsibilities.<sup>155</sup> For this reason it is illogical to assume that male and female can both be created by God and in the image of God yet one is less equal than the other. Since both are created in God's image, this faulty logic would imply that part of God is less equal than another part.

### ***3.4.2 Jesus and Women's Empowerment***

During Jesus' ministry he sympathised with the poor, the oppressed and the marginalized people in order to restore God's image in them. His preaching was directed to all people - women and men. But He gave particular attention to women and children who were not counted in the Jewish culture.<sup>156</sup> Jesus' attitude towards women was radically different from what was customary at his time. Women normally stayed at home and attend to domestic duties.<sup>157</sup> Jesus profoundly challenged the taboos of his society regarding the place of women and the relationship between men and women. "...Jesus often used women as central figures in his stories and sayings, always in positive way."<sup>158</sup> He actually empowered women. He gave them a sense of dignity as He released them from their captivity and allowed them to travel with Him and His twelve disciples. In so doing; He wanted to challenge patriarchal structures.

---

<sup>155</sup> World Alliance of Reformed churches Research. 2003. p 5.

<sup>156</sup> Jerry Folk.1991. *Doing theology, doing justice*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press. p 103.

<sup>157</sup> Anne Wasike Nasimiyu. 1991. "Christology and African Woman's experience" in Robert J. S. ed. *Faces of Jesus in Africa*. Britain : SCM press Ltd. p 73.

<sup>158</sup> Jerry Folk. 1991. p103.

Moreover, the Gospels of Jesus portray how he lived out his vision of the equality of women in the kingdom. Folk emphasises that while the title “son of Abraham” is used by the Jewish to refer to a male member of chosen people, Jesus used the phrase “daughter of Abraham” as a title of honour for a woman and a sign of membership of the kingdom of God.<sup>159</sup> Thus, women participate fully together with men in the kingdom of God which was the central message of Jesus’ ministry.

### ***3.4.3 The Early Church and Women’s Ministry***

The early Christian community apparently followed Jesus’ example when they thought that the world was coming to an end very soon. Women were allowed to hold positions of responsibility. It reflected the vigorous ministry of women and they represented God’s image as they served as preachers, prophets, deaconesses and Jesus’ disciples. They performed all other works that were predominantly known as male responsibilities.<sup>160</sup> Many women, like Jesus’ mother, Mary, as well as Dorcas, Julia, Lydia, Priscilla and Phoebe were important in the early Christian Church.<sup>161</sup> For instance as Rakoczy explains Mary Magdalene fulfilled the three criteria to be an apostle. One must first have accompanied Jesus; second, seen the risen Jesus; and third, been commissioned by Jesus.<sup>162</sup>

Indeed the resurrection event indicates the witness the discipleship of the women. They are the first ones to carry the incredible message that the Lord is risen, a message that the disciples could not quickly believe.<sup>163</sup> With the gifts of the Holy Spirit after the resurrection, both men and women worked together in harmony, spreading the good news of salvation. In the early church, things were much better when the vision of community was lived in which there is neither male nor female. One wonders what happened, in light of the fact that the contemporary Church has stopped what Jesus himself had initiated.

When the Church became settled and started to practice Roman culture, the wife had to live by the patriarchal code of the society, according to the household codes in Colossians and Ephesians. Those codes teach women to be subject to their husbands. Moreover, Anne

---

<sup>159</sup> Jerry Folk. 1991. p105.

<sup>160</sup> Susan Rakoczy. 2004. p 206.

<sup>161</sup> Act of the Apostles 1: 14.

<sup>162</sup> Susan Rakoczy. 2004. p 203.

<sup>163</sup> Susan Rakoczy. 2004. p 106.

Nasimiyu states “...in the Jewish worldview, a woman was considered a constant danger to man. Therefore women were kept away from the public eye in order to protect men from the danger.”<sup>164</sup> This indicates how things went wrong afterwards, how the power of the patriarchal spirit resurfaced slowly but surely and women were forced back into passive lives in Church and society. They were again made to feel that Jesus’ salvation is mainly directed to men rather than women.

### **3.5 Women’s Needs for Empowerment**

We have seen that Rwandan women are oppressed and marginalised by patriarchal culture as well as the Christian religious tradition. Oduyoye argues that “...in general women’s experience of the Church is no different from the culture outside the Church structures.”<sup>165</sup>

Although change has been slow, the Presbyterian Church is making a significant effort in addressing gender justice issues. For instance the Constitution of the Church indicates that the number of women who participate in the General Synod - the highest decision making organ of the Church - should be equal to that of men.<sup>166</sup> Women are involved in the Parish leadership as elders and deacons. Moreover, I have to acknowledge the fact that the Presbyterian Church was the first denomination in Rwanda to embrace women’s ordination in 1976. And women Pastors are equally treated as men in the ministry. However, the number of women pastors is still insignificant. It was observed during the centenary celebration in 2007 that ordained women in the Presbyterian Church in Rwanda accounted just about twelve percent.<sup>167</sup> Although the number of women benefiting from scholarships in theological education is gradually increasing, we do not have as many women holding high level degrees such as master’s and doctorates as men.

Therefore, the commitment to equal participation of women and men continues to challenge the Presbyterian Church. The number of ordained women is still small. The patriarchal system continues to reinforce inequality in one way or another and exclusive language is being used every day in worship services and church meetings. Even when the Church has

---

<sup>164</sup> Anne Wasike Nasimiyu. 1991. p 74.

<sup>165</sup> Mercy Amba Oduyoye. 2001. p 81.

<sup>166</sup> Presbyterian Church in Rwanda 1997. General Assembly minutes, Kigali : EPR. p 51.

<sup>167</sup> Elisee Musemakweli and William Willems. 2007. p 35.

the institutions and mechanisms for the participation of women, few of them are practiced as Oduyoye argues.<sup>168</sup> Although the constitution of the Presbyterian Church says that the number of male participants in the General Synod should be equal to female, it has been my common experience that male pastors bring women to the meeting who are not able to contribute, just to meet the Church requirement. Even those who can contribute feel shy and humiliated to speak in public as the patriarchal culture has silenced them. Most male pastors do this not because they do not have women who can follow the language of the church and significantly contribute to the well being of the Church, but they do it either to ridicule women's participation in the meeting or to avoid women's challenges towards them.

Therefore, there is a need to contextualize theological findings and visions. There is a need to open up new awareness of the strengths of both women and men and search for their creative integration in the commitment for more justice in relationships. Here Oduyoye calls the Church to be a real model of community in which all have the possibility to participate. She states that "...the community has to live out its proclaimed *raison d'être* based on the life of the Christ who came that all may have abundant life."<sup>169</sup> According to Oduyoye, abundant life is the one which is nurtured in a communion where there is participation of all, and there is no room for subordination.<sup>170</sup>

One way in which the Church can fulfill God's liberating mission is to re-examine its mission in the light of today's reality with a re-reading and reinterpretation of Scripture for women's liberation. In the next paragraph I will focus on how feminist cultural and biblical hermeneutics can be useful tools for women's liberation in Rwanda as proposed by African women's theologians.

### ***3.5.1 Feminist Cultural and Biblical Hermeneutics***

The Presbyterian Church in Rwanda belongs to the Reformed Churches family. The heart of its tradition is an essential commitment to God's grace witnessed in Scripture, encountered in Christ, and experienced in daily life.<sup>171</sup> The cornerstone of the formulation of Reformed beliefs is theological reflection anchored in the Word of God. Therefore, the Bible continues

---

<sup>168</sup> Mercy Amba Oduyoye. 2001. p 82.

<sup>169</sup> Mercy Amba Oduyoye. 2001. p 86.

<sup>170</sup> Mercy Amba, Oduyoye. 2001. p 86.

<sup>171</sup> <http://www.pkn.nl/site/uploadedDocs/TheAccraConfession.pdf> accessed on 2<sup>nd</sup> September 2009

to have an authoritative place in shaping Presbyterians' reality today. And yet, the same Bible contains the Word of God which women experience as oppressive by marginalisation of their humanity. In order to remove this imbalance, cultural and biblical hermeneutics are needed as suggested by African women's theology. To illustrate further, Oduyoye explains that "...since the Bible depicts other peoples' cultures, and we know from African culture that not everything in culture is liberating, we come to the Bible with the same cautious approach we have to culture."<sup>172</sup> Rakoczy moreover, points out that "...it very much matters 'where one stands' in a situation since it is from there that one interprets texts and events."<sup>173</sup>

Consequently, feminist theologians and African women's theologians propose firstly to use a "hermeneutic of suspicion" to all biblical texts and to the "history of the Bible's exegesis and its contemporary interpretation."<sup>174</sup> As Fiorenza a feminist biblical scholar maintains, the Bible contains texts that are andocentric. These patriarchal texts were composed in harmony with its skewed vision of women and the world.<sup>175</sup> Given such an understanding of Scripture as the product of oppressive patriarchy, the question arises as to how Christian feminist theologians are to employ Scripture in their theological construction. Schüssler argues that scholars must reject any doctrine of biblical inspiration or any construal of the Bible that connects revelation materially with the text of Scripture.<sup>176</sup> She goes further to argue that feminist theologians must develop a feminist critical consciousness that accepts as revelatory only biblical impulses that cohere "...with women's struggle for liberation from all patriarchal oppression."<sup>177</sup> Furthermore, Oduyoye has also added that "...any interpretation of the Bible is unacceptable if it does harm to women, vulnerable and the voiceless."<sup>178</sup>

Kanyoro suggests that "...cultural hermeneutics is an important first step towards an African women's liberation theology."<sup>179</sup> Oduyoye also emphasises that "...cultural hermeneutics is the African women's way of taking seriously the issues of continuity and change."<sup>180</sup> She

---

<sup>172</sup> Mercy Amba Oduyoye. 2001. p 12.

<sup>173</sup> Susan Rakoczy. 2004. p 103.

<sup>174</sup> Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, 1985. in *Feminist Interpretation of the Bible*, Letty M. Russell, ed., Philadelphia: Westminster Press. p 130.

<sup>175</sup> Elizabeth Fiorenza 1985. p130.

<sup>176</sup> Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza. 1989. *In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins*, New York: Crossroad. p 21.

<sup>177</sup> Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza. 1989. p 21.

<sup>178</sup> Mercy Amba Oduyoye. 2001. p 12.

<sup>179</sup> Musimbi Kanyoro. 2002a. *Introducing Feminist Cultural Hermeneutics: An African perspective*. Sheffield Academic Press. p16.

<sup>180</sup> Mercy Amba Oduyoye. 2001. p 14.

seeks the cultural elements that liberate women and affirm women's humanity. She describes how "...women are developing cultural hermeneutics for the appropriation of Africa's religio-culture, which constitutes a resource for envisioning the will of God and the meaning of women's humanity."<sup>181</sup> Additionally, Rakoczy suggests that feminist theologians should move from 'biblical hermeneutics' to 'hermeneutics of liberation' which offers hope to women as it changes the social reality of the Christian Churches where religious oppression and eradication of women takes its special historical forms.<sup>182</sup>

Thus, as far as the Bible is concerned in the Presbyterian Church tradition, it needs to be re-read with new eyes towards a hermeneutic of liberation which gives hope and empowers women to rise. The next section will examine how the Church is participating in empowering women not only culturally and spiritually but also economically.

### ***3.5.2 Economic Empowerment***

As we have seen throughout this chapter, the effects of the 1994 genocide on social economic relations were aggravated further by patriarchal culture that hampers the development of women, socially, economically, and spiritually. Certainly, the mission of the Church in Rwanda needs to mean integral and holistic salvation. This is a mission that touches the whole person, in all its aspects and components, the spiritual, the physical, and the psychological. As Bellagamba indicates "...persons truly experience redemption and salvation when they are free from personal forces which dehumanise, do not allow them to grow, to feel loved, to rejoice in freedom, and to live with dignity worthy of God's children."<sup>183</sup> According to him, the view that a person is saved or redeemed because the soul is free from sin and can go to heaven is to reduce redemption and salvation to merely spiritual entities with no regard to the rest of a human person.<sup>184</sup> He goes on to argue that "...it is to play into the hands of those who affirm that religion is the opium of the people, because it is mainly, if not exclusively, concerned with the spiritual and with the other life."<sup>185</sup> Thus, theologically, it becomes the responsibility of the church not to tolerate oppressive cultures which create poverty among women. The best way to do this is to empower women

---

<sup>181</sup> Oduyoye Mercy A. 2001. p 18.

<sup>182</sup> Susan Rakoczy. 2004. p 103.

<sup>183</sup> Anthony Bellaganda.1992. *Mission & Ministry in the Global Church*. Maryknoll, Orbis: N.Y. p 55.

<sup>184</sup> Anthony Bellaganda.1992. p 54.

<sup>185</sup> Anthony Bellaganda.1992. p 55.

economically in order to avoid dependency and subordination that drives them into vulnerable conditions.

The term empowerment suggests the idea of enablement and capacity building. Jo Rowlands, in her discussion of empowerment in relation to community work, social work and politics, suggests that empowerment may only be determined by the one doing the empowering.<sup>186</sup> In this understanding, empowerment would have to do with changing closed structures in order to allow those who have previously been left out to participate in decision-making. In the 1980s, the gender and development approach was regarded as a weapon for the weak, best wielded through grassroots and participatory activities.<sup>187</sup> Later on it was seen as a means for enhancing efficiency and productivity without changing the status quo. On the other hand, it was seen as a method of social transformation and achieving gender equality. Momsen sees empowerment as:

... a broad development process that enables people to gain self-confidence and self-esteem, so allowing both men and women to actively participate in development decision-making. The empowerment approach was also linked to the rise of participatory approaches to development and often meant working with women of the community level building organisational skills.<sup>188</sup>

In the wake of the 1994 genocide, the situation needed huge resources and strategies to rebuild the economy. The country went through an emergency period during which it relied greatly on external aid. Different NGOs, religious institutions and more international organisations intervened with welfare and relief. The Presbyterian Church has played a significant role in assisting people during the period of crisis. As time went on, serious effort has been made by International organisations such as the World Bank and IMF to contribute to the economic reconstruction of Rwanda and to mobilise people for sustainable development.

The Rwandan society was particularly concerned with the plight of women who continue to hold their families together and are held responsible for their survival. The government of Rwanda is strongly committed to achieve gender equality since the country cannot develop

---

<sup>186</sup> J.O,Rowlands.1998. "A Word of the Times, but what does it mean? Empowerment in the discourse and practice of Development". In Asfar, haleh (ed). *Women and Empowerment Illustrations from the Third World*. London: MACMILLAN Press LTD. pp 11-34.

<sup>187</sup> Janet H.Momsen. 2004. . *Gender and development*. London: Routlegde. p 14.

<sup>188</sup> Janet H.Momsen. 2004. pp 14-15.

when women are left out while they represent the majority of the population. Therefore, across its development priorities, an important issue for the government of Rwanda is the promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment as a prerequisite for sustainable peace and development. This is echoed in the words of President Paul Kagame during the official opening of a gender training workshop for Parliamentarians in 1999 as UNIFEM quotes:

The abrupt shift to monetary economy, formal education and modern technology played a key role in restructuring gender relations to the disadvantage of women. These imbalances are not only an obstacle to the country's development but constitute a form of social injustice. It is imperative to our lawmakers, policy makers and implementers to have an objective and correct analysis of the gender question in order to design appropriate corrective policies and the question of gender equality in our society needs a clear and critical evaluation in order to come up with concrete strategies to map the future development in which men and women are true partners and beneficiaries. My understanding of gender is that it is an issue of good governance, good economic management and respect of human rights.<sup>189</sup>

This speech indicates that gender justice is central to the well-being and development of the family unit. Ranjini comments that "...to make a claim that in developing women one develops the family; in development families one develops the community; in development communities one develops nation; in developing nations we dream of developing the world."<sup>190</sup>

### ***3.5.3 Self-reliant Development Projects***

Alongside the Rwandan government's efforts, the religious institutions have been set-up to promote gender equality in empowering women to overcome poverty. The Presbyterian Church is engaged in training women in various management techniques, including projects that create jobs and generate an income for sustainable livelihoods.<sup>191</sup> The Church brings awareness to the community that poverty is not the will of God; rather it is the product of injustice, exploitation and unequal resource-sharing. However, the Church understands that poverty is something that can be overcome when poor people are given opportunities to participate fully in the planning process of poverty eradication.

---

<sup>189</sup> United Nations Development Funds for Women 2007. *The Vision and the Walk: Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in Rwanda*. Kigali: UNIFEM. p5.

<sup>190</sup> Ranjini, Rebera, ed. 1990. *We Cannot Dream Alone : A story of women in development*. Geneva: WCC publications. p 53.

<sup>191</sup> Desire, Rutaganda. 2007. *Collaboration entre Chrétiens et Musulmans dans la lutte contre la pauvreté au Rwanda*, Kigali: CFD. pp 10-13.



Traditionally the Presbyterian Church has been providing financial support to different development projects using the 'driven-needs approach' which focuses largely on the deficiencies rather than the capacities of its members. This deficiency focus is usually described as a concern for the needs of local members. Most of these initiatives failed due to the absence of community initiatives and participation. The assumption underlying much of the theology about development as de Gruchy notes "...are that Christians must do good things for those who are poor, marginalised and helpless and consider that they are not able to do anything."<sup>192</sup>

Having been challenged by participatory development, as it was suggested in chapter one with the ABCD model, the Presbyterian Church has sought to move from the need-driven approach that focuses on the lack in community, to focus on people's capabilities as a way of development. Consequently, in 1996 the Presbyterian Church in Rwanda started a Training and Documentation Centre. Its objective was to invite Rwandan people, especially churches and religious confessions to take up current challenges, which have always been considered as officials' prerogatives.<sup>193</sup> Thus, the CFD set up a women's program with the aim of empowering women to participate in socio-economic development, poverty reduction and job creation initiatives as they fight against gender imbalance.<sup>194</sup> In implementing this vision, the Presbyterian Training and Documentation Centre started training women's groups from different parishes through seminars and workshops in order to build their capacities.

Therefore, through local women's cooperatives of development, CFD is making a significant effort to teach women to fish and feed themselves for life instead of giving them fish and food for one day, as it has been the ancient proverb. "Give a man (sic) a fish, and you feed him for a day; teach him to fish and you feed him for lifetime."<sup>195</sup>

---

<sup>192</sup> Steve, de Gruchy. 2003. "Of Agency, Assets and Appreciation: Seeking Some Commonalities Between Theology and Development", *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa*, 117, 20-39.

<sup>193</sup> Desire, Rutaganda. 2007. pp 12-13.

<sup>194</sup> Desire, Rutaganda. 2007. p 14.

<sup>195</sup> David Korten.1990. *Getting to the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: voluntary action and the global agenda*, Connecticut: Kumarian Press. p 139.

### **3.6 Conclusion**

This chapter began with the general discussion of the nature and causes of poverty among women, where we have seen that women are the poorest group in the world. This is not because women are weak intellectually, lazy or stupid, as patriarchal culture considers them. They are poor because of unequal power relations which deny them opportunities. The 1994 genocide drove women into extreme poverty. However, the chapter looked at how women can be liberated from this bondage. Using theological insights we realised that God created men and women equally, loved them and gave them the same stewardship over all creation. In the New Testament we saw Jesus challenging society and religious policies which denied women's humanity. From Jesus' example, the early Church communities were inclusive. Women were participating fully in Jesus' ministry. However, when the Church started to practice Roman culture the situations changed. Wives were obliged to live by the patriarchal codes of the society, according to the household codes in Colossians and Ephesians that teach women to be subject to their husbands.

Nevertheless this chapter was a reminder that women need liberation and asserts that gender justice is part of God's mission. In this light, the Church needs to recognise that the Scripture contains texts which are andocentric, as it was written by men. Indeed, the chapter showed the necessity of empowering women not only spiritually but also economically. This is based on the mission of God which is an integrating mission that promotes life in its fullness. This has motivated the Presbyterian Church in Rwanda, as a socio-development agency, to consider how to empower women to overcome poverty starting with their strengths, abilities, gifts and potentials. Women's initiatives and projects will be discussed further in the next chapter with specific reference to Ageseke Project in Ruyumba Presbyterian Parish.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### THE HISTORY OF AGASEKE PROJECT IN RUYUMBA PARISH

#### 4.1 Introduction

The previous chapter discussed the engagement of the Presbyterian Church as an agent of social transformation for empowering women. It highlighted the root causes of poverty among women. As human beings created in God's image, women deserve dignity and respect. The Church emphasises economic empowerment and offers various training skills through workshops and seminars on how to start income generation projects and create jobs. This chapter will examine a women's organisation in Ruyumba parish. It will outline the Agaseke project that developed as a result of successful training that Ruyumba women received. The chapter will point out the history of the Agaseke basket product which began as a traditional activity by rural women and then turned into a business activity to uplift Rwandan women after the 1994 genocide tragedies. Indeed, the chapter will discuss the traditional, social and economic aspects of the Agaseke project. It will also show how women in Ruyumba Parish had an idea to start the Agaseke project as an income regeneration project.

#### 4.2. Women's Organisation in Ruyumba Parish

Agnes Abuom notes that although the majority of church members are women, the relationship between the church and women is conflicted. On the one hand the Church empowers women; on the other hand it has been slow in applying the revolutionary message of good news for women within its own structures.<sup>196</sup> Consequently, women tend to be marginalised within the church insofar as decision-making and leadership are concerned. However, in many respects, the church has been one of the few civic institutions that have empowered women. It is in the church context that women's organisations such as Mothers Union, the Women's Guild, and others have flourished. Through these organisations, women

---

<sup>196</sup> Agnes Abuom. 2001. "Women's issues in Health and Education" in D. Belshaw, R. Calderisi and C. Sugden (eds) *Faith in development: Partnership between the World Bank and the Churches of Africa*. Oxford: Regnum. p 125.

have engaged in delivery of social services at the micro level as well as in welfare activities.<sup>197</sup>

It is in this spirit that the women in Ruyumba parish are organised under the name of “*Abatwaramucyo*” organisation, meaning those who carry the light. This was the name given by missionaries to women when the Presbyterian Church was established in Rwanda in 1907 by the German Bethel Mission.<sup>198</sup> Every Presbyterian woman was expected to be in *Abatwaramucyo* organisation. It was open to all Christian women in the church who wanted to commit to serve God.

The *Abatwaramucyo* were to meet every Thursday for prayers and Bible study. Kumalo comments on the importance of the Bible study in that it helps the poor people to reflect on their situation and to relate it to the biblical stories read and shared in the group.<sup>199</sup> Such reflection occurred within the *Abatwaramucyo* organisation as they read the Scriptures in relation to their situation. Their meetings included informal education, such as adult literacy, where women learned to read the Bible so that they could give the proper spiritual guidance in their families.<sup>200</sup> As Anne Clifford notes, the nineteenth-century view of women as the guiding spirit of a moral home became firmly established and still remains in many sections of society. This tradition explains in part why women (more often than men) have long been involved in service-oriented church-related projects such as instruction in Sunday school, as well as evangelisation outreach programs where women provide services to the elderly and physically disabled as well as adult literacy classes.<sup>201</sup>

Additionally, during *Abatwaramucyo* meetings, women were learning different skills such as cooking and sewing so that they could take care of their families. They were to respect and submit to their husbands according to the Scripture. No one was allowed to divorce even if she was abused. She could not complain as she was taught to persevere. Nevertheless, during women’s meetings they could deal with the issue of Christian family life. In this regards, Esther Mombo notes that women’s organisations also “...offered channels to women in which they could form bonds with their peers and could provide group support in times of

---

<sup>197</sup> Agnes Abuom. 2001. p 125.

<sup>198</sup> The *Abatwaramucyo* minutes of March 1910

<sup>199</sup> Simangakiso R.Kumalo. 2003. *From Deserts to Forests*. Pretoria: CB Power Bible Centre. p 69.

<sup>200</sup> The *Abatwaramucyo* minutes of March 1910

<sup>201</sup> Anne M.Clifford. 2005. *Introduction Feminist Theology*. Maryknoll: Orbis. p 153.

personal and family crisis.”<sup>202</sup> Likewise, Haddad states that a women’s organisation is a place where women gather together, without men present, and prescribe their own agenda of faith and practical daily living.<sup>203</sup>

Later, when the missionaries left, this inspiration of *Abatwaramucyo* slowly changed its agenda. Some skills training stopped when the wives of missionaries, who were in charge of them, left with their husbands. But women have continued to meet regularly, pray together and discuss women’s issues in their parish. In order to enhance women’s participation in the Church, the Presbyterian Church General Synod of 1997 admitted that women play an important role in the church, particularly after the 1994 genocide when men were few in the Church. This synod accepted women’s organisations in the Church’s structure. From that time, women started to be represented in different councils of the church from parish level to the national level.<sup>204</sup> The leadership of women’s organisations is formed by a committee of seven members including a chairperson, vice chairperson, secretary, treasurer and three advisors.<sup>205</sup>

It is in this context that women in Ruyumba Presbyterian Church Parish are involved in their Parish activities such as preaching the Gospel and in creating liturgies. Most women are involved in choir groups, prayer meetings and in evangelisation teams. In addition, they do charity work where they visit the sick, elderly, disabled people and others who are in need, especially those who have left the church. They work in solidarity and support each other in the times of both joy and sorrow.

#### ***4.3 Churchwomen and Income Generation Projects***

The Presbyterian Church in Rwanda acknowledges that the mission of God is integrated and holistic. In addition to mission work carried out by churchwomen through different groups and organisations, women in the Presbyterian Church are engaged in many various initiatives and projects in order to overcome poverty. In this regards, Haddad argues that women’s

---

<sup>202</sup> Esther, Mombo. 2002. “Harahamisi and Jumaa: The Development of the Women’s Meetings in East Africa Yearly Meeting of Friends (Quakers) in Isabel Apawo Phiri, Devakarsham Betty Govinden & Sarojini Nadar. *Her-stories: Hidden Histories of Women of faith in Africa*. Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications. P 68.

<sup>203</sup> Beverley, Haddad. 2003. Gender, development and faith: the church and women’s struggle to survive. *Missionalia* 31 (3), p 445.

<sup>204</sup> The minute of 42<sup>nd</sup> General Synod.1997. p 16.

<sup>205</sup> The minute of 42<sup>nd</sup> General Synod. 1997. p 17.

groups are key sites of survival practice and a place where poor women are taking control of their lives in an attempt to alleviate their lived reality of poverty.<sup>206</sup> She emphasises that “...through these church women’s prayer groups, poor and marginalised find courage, strength, and resources to persevere in the face of near death.”<sup>207</sup>

Rowlands understands that the empowerment of women is to enable or give them power to be able to control their own lives. It is to give women the ability to negotiate, communicate and get support, to defend self/rights, dignity and sense of self in the relationship and to teach them to become confident and more able to act.<sup>208</sup> The confidence of women will depend on being empowered economically. Similarly, Fulata Moyo argues that “...the Church has to acknowledge the socio-economic and religious-cultural realities that place women in situations where they are at the mercy of their male counterparts.”<sup>209</sup> Osmani sees women’s income as important in their empowerment in three ways: firstly, income increases their independence as they become more economically independent and contribute to the household income. Secondly, economic empowerment of women will ensure that their ability to contribute is preserved in the household, as they earn money as well as men do. Thirdly, as women contribute to their household economy they value themselves and create in themselves esteem as they become perceived as valuable.<sup>210</sup>

To respond to the need for women’s economic empowerment, the Presbyterian Church, through the CFD women’s programme, emphasises that women’s projects and programmes must express solidarity among women in order to share their wisdom. These include resources, insights, and experiences that lead to reciprocal enrichment and change. They must also empower women to create room for self-expression.<sup>211</sup> Women are encouraged to identify their own needs, analyse their own situations and discover their own potential for contributing toward change in the community. Ranjini argues that “...empowerment of women also means providing opportunities for a ‘living’ experience of learning for both

---

<sup>206</sup> Beverley Haddad. 2003. Gender, development and faith: the church and women’s struggle to survive. *Missionalia* 31 (3), p 445.

<sup>207</sup> Beverley Haddad. 2003. p 445.

<sup>208</sup> J.O Rowlands.1998. p 28.

<sup>209</sup> Fulata Moyo. 2005. ‘Sex, Gender, Power and HIV/AIDS in Malawi: Threats and challenges to women being Church.’ In Isabel Apawo Phiri and Sarojini Nadar, eds. *On Being Church: African women’s voices and visions*. Geneva: WCC publications. p 136.

<sup>210</sup>Osmani, Khan N. Lutfun. 1998. ‘The Grameen Bank Experiment: Empowerment of Women through Credit’ in Afshar, Haleh (ed). *Women and Empowerment Illustrations from the Third World*. London: MACMILLAN PRESS LTD. p 73.

<sup>211</sup> Desire Rutaganda. 2007. p 58.

donor and receiver.”<sup>212</sup> She goes on to emphasise that “...participation in a development programme leads one to reflect on questions about human dignity and the meaning of human community.”<sup>213</sup> The CFD recognition now accorded to women acknowledges that in the past, women have been considered passive, perceived as people who have nothing to contribute for development. They have been seen as people dependent on other people’s ideas as if they are not fully human beings who can think and act. The above was echoed by de Gruchy who says that “...women are fully human created in the image of God, loved by God, Jesus died on the cross for them.”<sup>214</sup>

Therefore, in the selection process of projects, CFD takes the following questions into account: First, are women actually involved in the initiation, planning, implementation, and evaluation of the project? Second, does the project enhance the empowerment and self-reliance of women? Third, does the project offer long-lasting and multiplying effects for the community? Fourth, does the project conscientize rural and non-rural persons to the aspirations of communities working toward liberation, self-empowerment, self-development, and does it foster commitment to such aspiration? Fifth, what kinds of local contributions does the group commit toward the project?<sup>215</sup>

With these basic principles in mind, the CFD has emphasised training women through workshops aimed at raising awareness of issues such as poverty and how to overcome it. Women in different parishes have come up with different ideas of projects. One of the women’s groups that received this training was from Ruyumba Parish, who later decided to embark on “Agaseke Project” in 1999 in order to sustain their livelihoods. In the next section the history of the Agaseke product is discussed.

---

<sup>212</sup> Rebera Ranjini. ed. 1990. p.3

<sup>213</sup> Rebera Ranjini. ed. 1990. p.3.

<sup>214</sup> Steve de Gruchy. 2003. p 23.

<sup>215</sup> CFD 2006. Women and poverty reduction programme : unpublished document. p 6.

#### 4.4 The concept of Agaseke (Basket) Product



While women weave Agaseke they tell stories



Agaseke can be weaved in different forms, colours and sizes



#### ***4.4.1 Traditional Aspects of Agaseke***

Agaseke weaving has been Rwanda's greatest craft and a critical community activity for hundreds of years. Customarily woven by women, the Agaseke basket represents an historic account and is renowned for its impressive quality and associated cultural traditions. It was a way of women gathering around an activity, and while women were weaving baskets, it was an opportunity for sharing their experiences. The old basket weaving has been dominated by women who pass on the skill from mothers to daughters. The old women could teach the young ones through their experience of life. The young ones were taught how to work hard for the well-being of their families.<sup>216</sup>

The Agaseke product was always a beautifully woven, neat and unique small basket that ornamented most Rwandan households, serving the purpose of keeping different things in the house and carrying the gift to friends and neighbours. Moreover Agaseke was used in ceremonies like weddings where the bride received it as a wedding gift. This basket was a present which the bride's family gave the groom. Since it always has a lid, it signifies that the bride is untouched and she is giving herself for the first time to her husband.<sup>217</sup> The Agaseke was also a sign to show that the bride would keep all the family secrets. Nkubana notes "The basket would be kept beside the bed as a sign that all family secrets would be kept there."<sup>218</sup> This emphasises gender injustice where Rwandan patriarchal culture requires the girls to not be involved in sexual affairs before marriage which is not the same for the boys.

#### ***4.4.2 Social Aspects of Agaseke***

After the 1994 genocide the Agaseke was used to promote peace. Donnah Kamashazi notes that "...since then the Agaseke has acquired other names like love basket and peace basket and then people use the basket for events and decoration."<sup>219</sup> She explains that the baskets were used to promote peace as a way of promoting women's involvement in peace and reconciliation. Moreover, the project helps women to express their talents and creativity using their natural gifts. Women have returned to the culture of sharing wisdom and joy.

---

<sup>216</sup> Haleh A and Barrientos, S. (eds) 1999. *Women, Globalisation and Fragmentation in the development World*, London: Mac Millan Press Ltd. p14.

<sup>217</sup> Jeanette Nkubana. 2008. Increasing Women's access to international markets. Unpublished Paper. p 20.

<sup>218</sup> Jeanette Nkubana. 2008. p 21.

<sup>219</sup> Donnah Kamashazi. 2006. *La participation de la femme Rwandaise au Développement socio-économique*, Kigali : UNIFEM. p 50.

Kamashaza points out that weaving baskets is the way women can concentrate on their common interests and go beyond their differences and promote peace.<sup>220</sup> For instance women whose husbands were killed during the genocide can sit with women whose husbands are in jail due to their involvement in the massacres. They weave baskets together while they share their experiences as women. This activity has brought them together and allowed them to move on with their lives. Kamashaza says that they have a common purpose of weaving, working for survival and they actually share the pain and console each other. She notes that “...they are able to achieve this because the project has brought them together in a way that motivates them to take control of their lives for their futures.”<sup>221</sup> This activity brings peace and reconciliation to the community. It does not only reduce poverty but it also builds unity, which is a major need in Rwanda.<sup>222</sup> Therefore, the Agaseke is now a famous market product that has gained recognition across the world. It has become not only a market product but also a national symbol that promotes national identity and patriotism. The conical basket is on the national seal and versions can be found on nearly every corner in the country’s capital, Kigali.<sup>223</sup>

#### ***4.4.3 Economic Aspects of Agaseke***

After the 1994 genocide tragedies, this handcraft art was promoted to uplift poor women in Rwanda through harnessing their productivity and providing them with a stable income. Each basket in the collection is inspired by a traditional Rwandan design and is entirely handmade by weavers using a century’s old technique.<sup>224</sup> Now the support of the basket project is focused on trade. It gives power to the women to shape their own future and it has become a serious economic activity in the country. Through brokered connections to the private sector, basket-making cooperatives comprise of groups of vulnerable women. The Rwanda Investment and Export Promotion Agency (RIEPA) helps to market and sell the Agaseke to the rest of the world. As a result, Rwandan handcrafts have captured international attention, causing a surge in income for women. Following a major order by a United States department store Macy’s, within just a few years thousands of women have become employed in making

---

<sup>220</sup> Donnah Kamashazi. 2006. p 51.

<sup>221</sup> Donnah Kamashazi. 2006. p 52.

<sup>222</sup> Jeanette Nkubana. 2008. p 21.

<sup>223</sup> <http://allafrica.com/stories/2000905181264.html> : accessed on 18th September 2009

<sup>224</sup> Jeanette Nkubana. 2008. Increasing Women’s access to international markets. Unpublished Paper. p 22.

baskets for sale, abroad and to tourists.<sup>225</sup> The world's largest department store situated in the United States agreed to market the Agaseke, and with over 850 stores engaged in these sales, this business has managed to keep pace with efforts to emancipate women in all spheres of life.<sup>226</sup> By 2005 three companies: Modis International, Gahaya Links, and AVEGA Agahozo had taken advantage of this opportunity to export to Macy's department store.<sup>227</sup>

Recognizing the potential of the product, the government has initiated a program of support to the sector. The government has established handcraft centres and organised women into cooperatives, while providing training to help improve their skills. One highly visible program, supported by the First Lady, Mrs Jeanette Kagame, and the Mayor of Kigali, has been the Agaseke Promotion Program, which has employed over 3,000 impoverished women.<sup>228</sup> Therefore, this business has managed to answer the most vexing issue of rural poverty. It is on record today that the poorest woman in rural Rwanda has the capacity to earn 30,000 Frw<sup>229</sup> a month from the Agaseke business.<sup>230</sup> Most women who are involved in this basket weaving have now a bank account in their local community banks. Then, they are able to pay their contribution to the local mutual health programme, pay school fees for their children and cater for the family's basic needs.

#### **4.5 Agaseke Project in Ruyumba Parish**

Women of Ruyumba Parish share the same struggles with the rest of the women in the country. Most of them are widows of the genocide, others have husbands in prison, still others are single mothers, and the rest stay with their partners. Nevertheless all are living in situations of extreme poverty. For this reason the Church has engaged and joined government in empowering women. They are not passive but capable of participating towards their own development. Thus, women are empowered to overcome poverty through their involvement with different initiatives including Agaseke project in Ruyumba Parish.

The Agaseke project in Ruyumba Parish started as a result of successful training by the CFD women's programme. After more than two years working in different workshops, as we have

---

<sup>225</sup> <http://www.macys.com/campaign/rwanda/index.jsp>: accessed on 5th October 2009

<sup>226</sup> <http://allafrica.com/stories/200905181264.html> : accessed on 18th September 2009

<sup>227</sup> RIEPA. 2006. *Export Guide*. Kigali

<sup>228</sup> Jennifer Youssef. 2008. "Intitute to train Rwandan Women." March, Detroit News. p 30.

<sup>229</sup> 30,000 Frw is equivalent to 60 \$US.

<sup>230</sup> Haleh A and Barrientos,S. (eds) 1999. pp 14-15.

seen earlier, the women became aware of how to start income-generating projects with the aim of fighting poverty and creating jobs.<sup>231</sup> Although the majority of Rwandan women, in particular women of Ruyumba parish, remain unskilled due to low levels of education, they have potential and talent in different areas which need to be mapped out and mobilised in order to be useful.

Since the Agaseke product was promoted to uplift women in the country, women of Ruyumba embraced it in order to sustain their livelihoods. In 1999, a group of twenty five women started Agaseke project in this parish. As time passed, the number increased and today they a group of forty-five women who meet three times in a week at the church building for weaving the baskets.<sup>232</sup> Women use natural dyes from coffee, tea and curry powder for different coloured baskets. Making these baskets involves a great deal of precision and patience, as it takes up to fifteen days to complete a set of five. Although women who started Agaseke project knew how to weave baskets and teach others, they needed to learn a modern way of doing it. Thus, the church continues to empower them in giving them skills and uses modern techniques of weaving so that they can compete and gain access to the market. CFD plays as a mediator between them and Gahaya Links<sup>233</sup> which buys and then exports the baskets.

#### **4.6. Conclusion**

The chapter discussed the Agaseke product, its nature and historical aspects. It explained how this product shifted its purpose from being primarily a traditional craft product to becoming a viable and successful economic product. Today it is used to uplift the women's livelihoods since they gain income from making this product. The chapter looked at the example of a women's initiative named Agaseke project in Ruyumba Presbyterian Parish. We have seen how women are able to create jobs for themselves that generate income and do not require academic expertise and much funding. The Agaseke project has therefore managed to address most of these socio-economic issues by empowering the most underprivileged women. The next chapter will be looking at research findings on the role that the Presbyterian Church plays in empowering women through the Agaseke project in Ruyumba parish. There will be

---

<sup>231</sup> Desire Rutaganda. 2007. p 21.

<sup>232</sup> Report of Agaseke project annual report December, 2006

<sup>233</sup> Gahaya Links is a Rwandan company that train rural women to weave modern baskets and export them to U.S market.

more details on how the Agaseke project helps women to improve their livelihoods. The chapter discusses the methodology used to collect information and will analyse the findings on the in-depth interviews with individuals and focus groups in order to answer the question “In what ways has the Presbyterian Church in Rwanda responded to women’s empowerment through ‘Agaseke Project’ in Ruyumba Parish?”

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF FIELD RESEARCH FINDINGS**

#### **5.1 Introduction**

In the previous three chapters, the study followed a historical approach in describing the effects of the 1994 genocide to women, the history of the Presbyterian Church and women's empowerment; and the history of the Agaseke project in Ruyumba parish. This chapter departs from a historical approach to focus on field research. It will combine two parts. Firstly it will describe the methodology used to collect and analyse the data. Secondly, it will present research findings. Thirdly it will analyse the findings. The analysis of the responses will cover the following topics: gender and poverty, the church and women's empowerment in Ruyumba parish, and the impact of Agaseke Project on women's lives.

#### **5.2 Field Work Methodology**

This study included an empirical study which used a qualitative approach. The fieldwork was done at Ruyumba Parish among women who are organised under Agaseke Project. The researcher has already indicated in chapter one the brief history and geography of Ruyumba Parish. The historical background of Agaseke project was given in chapter four. The researcher conducted the interviews herself in Kinyarwanda, a language in which all of the respondents' participating in the in-depth interviews and focus group discussions can understand and feel comfortable to speak. The respondents gave answers based on their own experiences and views on the role of the Presbyterian Church in women's empowerment through the Agaseke project. About seven open-ended questions helped to prompt the necessary information. The questions were written in English and translated into Kinyarwanda.

Three groups of five informants in each group were involved in the Agaseke project of the parish. Each group formed a focus group discussion. The in-depth interviews were conducted

with three individuals selected because of their leadership positions. These were: the chairperson of the Agaseke project, the pastor of Ruyumba parish and the chairperson of the women's programme in the Presbyterian Church. The sample size was selected because it represents a number that will enable discussion in groups large enough to offer a variety of views, but small enough for each informant to feel free to offer her views, and also to ensure that the information needed can be captured.

The sampling was purposive and judgmental. Babbie and Mouton argue that a purposive and judgmental sampling method may be appropriate when the researcher knows the population, its elements, and the nature of the research and its aims.<sup>234</sup> This sampling method also helps the researcher to use his/her judgment according to Saunders to "...select cases that will best enable him/her to answer the research question(s) and meet his/her objectives".<sup>235</sup>

The method used during in-depth interviews and group discussions was 'storytelling'. It is an acceptable methodology in feminist theology which was developed in particular by African women as a method for qualitative data collection.<sup>236</sup> It has been described as a narrative theology in which African women tell their stories and proceed from the narration of the story to analysing it, to show how the various actors in the story see themselves, interact with others, and view their own agency in life as a whole. Oduyoye argues that "The normative role of stories in Africa's oral corpus, and the role of story in biblical theology, gives women the paradigm for their theological reflection"<sup>237</sup>. In agreement with her, Musimbi Kanyoro also emphasises that "stories help to make connections between faith and action because they make use of experience and reflections as the intervals of connection"<sup>238</sup>.

This methodology was useful to this research since everything and everyone has a story. Throughout the ages storytelling has been used by all cultures to pass on knowledge and history in an effort to maintain their values and beliefs and to guide them move forward into new territory. Story was and is still used to learn and make sense of the world around us. Stories communicate the language of the heart and express all our emotions and feelings.

---

<sup>234</sup>E. Babbie and . Mouton J. 2001. *The Practice of Social Research*. South Africa Edition. Oxford: Oxford University Press. p167.

<sup>235</sup>M. Saunders. 2000. *Research Methods for Business Students*. London: Prentice. p 117.

<sup>236</sup>Mercy Amba Oduyoye. 2001. pp 10-11.

<sup>237</sup>Oduyoye, *Introducing African Women's Theology* pg 11

<sup>238</sup>Kanyoro, R. A. Musimbi 2002.

Stories are used to communicate ideas and concepts and by creating an emotional link, it adds an impact that in turns helps people to remember.<sup>239</sup>

The reseacher spent time listening to respondent's stories and reflected on them in relation to what I have done in previous chapters of this study.

The in-depth interviews were done with individuals at different times and places. The researcher booked an appointment by telephone and they chose a venue themselves as well as the date of the interview according to their schedules. Appointments which were booked before and during the meeting were followed up afterwards. The interview with the chairperson of the Agaseke project was held at the church building where Agaseke project is accommodated by the Parish to do their work. The pastor of Ruyumba parish was interviewed in his office while the chairperson of the women's programme in the Presbyterian Church was interviewed at her home. Forty minutes with each individual was sufficient time needed to cover the issues under discussion.

The meetings in all group discussions took place at Ruyumba parish where women usually meet for weaving baskets. Focus group discussions were composed of three groups of five informants: group one was composed of single women including genocide widows; group two was of married women; and group three was of prisoners' wives. All women are members of Agaseke projects and Ruyumba Parish; they were between the ages of 25-65 years old. There was no intention of selecting participants according to their ages. All the women are members of the Presbyterian Church in Ruyumba parish which was good because all of them know the stand of this denomination and its structures towards women. The discussions were enriched with the information needed from them. Two hours spent with each focus group was enough time to collect helpful information. The researcher moderated group discussions, making sure that all members contributed to the discussions.

The participants were clearly informed about the study and made voluntary decisions whether to participate or not. Since the researcher and the participants should benefit from the collaboration and cooperation,<sup>240</sup> this cannot occur when participation is forced or manipulated. Once permission for the participation in the study is given, the participant

---

<sup>239</sup> <http://www.scribd.com/doc/6450386/Storytelling-as-a-Key-Methodology>: accessed on 9th February 2010

<sup>240</sup> E. Babbie. and J. Mouton. 2001. pp 521-522.



should be respected. She/he is free to withdraw her/his participation from the study for any reason. Confidentiality was the second social value discussed in this study, to protect the participant when she/he revealed delicate information. In this case, the researcher knows who provided the information but she has kept the real names a secret. This was explained and agreed that the respondents would be given fictitious names when writing the dissertation.

The group discussions were opened by prayers since both the respondents and researcher are Christians. After a prayer and welcome to the participants, it was a time to introduce ourselves and that was followed by clarity on how the session would be conducted and what was expected from respondents was outlined. The respondents expressed their opinions freely and confessed that they were happy to talk to me as their fellow woman with whom they share the same experiences of life. This allowed the researcher to capture the information needed. The researcher used both audio recording and written answers to the questions asked during in-depth interviews and focus groups. The data that the researcher collected from the respondents was kept in a private locked box until the time of using them. It is suggested by Loeber and Kammen that "...confidentiality of all information obtained from participants should be carefully adhered to."<sup>241</sup>

### **5.3 Problems Encountered**

At the time I planned the fieldwork, Ruyumba Parish was led by a female pastor who was staying at the parish, but when I went for interviews she had gone for studies. The leadership was then under Church elders together with a neighbouring parish pastor who is a male and not staying at the parish. It became very difficult for me to get accommodation since I expected to stay in the pastor's home during my three days of interviews and group discussions at Ruyumba Parish. However, this did not stop the fieldwork from being done. I was offered hospitality as it is an African value and God's demand to care for a stranger. Oduyoye argues "...offering and receiving hospitality is a key indication of the African emphasis on sustaining our life-force at all costs, both for individuals and communities."<sup>242</sup> Furthermore, quoting Kahungu, Oduyoye states that in African culture, one can arrive any time of day and night without notice or prior arrangement and one will receive '*ce qu'il ya de*

---

<sup>241</sup> Margda S. Loeber and V.B. Kammen. Welmoet 1995. *Data collection and management: a practical guide*. London: SAGE Publications. p. 48.

<sup>242</sup> Mercy Amba Oduyoye. 2001. p 93.

*meilleur*.<sup>243</sup> This is what happened to me during my fieldwork time. I was offered wonderful accommodation by a woman member of Ruyumba parish without charge. But the guest is expected to leave a blessing behind which I did.

The second difficulty encountered was the absent pastor. She was selected for in-depth interviews because of her position. Therefore, I had to choose another parish leader. Fortunately the acting pastor accepted voluntarily to replace the pastor of Ruyumba Parish after explanations about the study. He offered information needed since he knew much about the parish and the work of women of Agaseke project.

## **5.4 Presentation of Research Findings**

Data collected was analysed in terms of the literature reviewed in chapters one to four. Responses will be presented and analysed under the following issues: women and poverty; Church and women's empowerment; and the impact of Agaseke project on women's lives.

### **5.4.1 Leaders' Responses**

The Pastor of Ruyumba Parish pointed out that the major cause of poverty among Rwandan women is the 1994 genocide that aggravated women's situation of poverty. He stated it in this way:

The poverty among women in Ruyumba parish is caused first of all by war and genocide tragedies which left widows and orphans without anything. Many women in this area are widows, and single mothers who are not sure if their husbands died or not since they missed each other in the refugee camps in neighbouring countries during and after the genocide. Other groups of women are spouses of genocide prisoners; in addition to the family responsibilities they take care of their husband in prison where they have to provide food for them. It is a big burden for women left behind.<sup>244</sup>

The comments of this pastor are in line with what was already discussed in chapter two of this study. The chairperson of women's programme in the Rwandan Presbyterian Church sees poverty as a crucial issue that hurts women, she narrated:

---

<sup>243</sup> Mercy Amba Odoyoye. 2001. p 94.

<sup>244</sup> The Pastor of Ruyumba parish during interviews on 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2009.

While the majority in Rwanda live in poverty situations, women live in extreme poverty. Therefore vulnerability of women needs attention since it affects the whole household. For a very long time, women have had a little or no participation in the economy. This is because of the patriarchal system which denies women opportunity to be involved in economic activities. Men consider themselves as givers and breadwinners while women have to depend on them. However, today's situation is different, many women are responsible of their households and they have become the breadwinner which is challenging them to change mindsets and start to involve themselves in economy affairs.<sup>245</sup>

The above quotation of the chairperson confirms the fact that Rwandan women have long suffered from economic dependency because of their lower social status compared to men, as mentioned in chapter three. Stereotyped labour and responsibility sharing in the home also persists and is the basis of the overwork of women and young girls. In connection to this, the pastor of Ruyumba Parish said "...women in this area are very hard working and if provided with the skills on how to run small-scale businesses as well as budgeting and planning, they can do well in their businesses."<sup>246</sup>

Both the pastor and chairperson of Agaseke project disclosed that most women in Ruyumba area are doing casual work and have small-scale businesses to earn a little to survive. It is in this situation that women do extra activities in search of money for the up-keep of their families. These leaders' observations find support in what Snyder and Tadesse said that the extended families dependence on women's earning has led women to move rapidly into market-oriented activities in order to meet the basic needs of their families.<sup>247</sup>

Nevertheless, the chairperson of Agaseke Project had a strong conviction that what her sisters and herself went through over the years would only be addressed adequately if women were represented in the society by women who understand what women experience, because they are women. She observed:

Due to the efforts made by women in the agricultural sector and the potential of our land, women in Ruyumba area should be in a position to improve their economic situation since they form the majority of the labour force in agricultural production. Their major problem is that most are totally dependent on their husbands and have no control over, not only of the economic life but also their own life. Women are able to identify their problems but have no power to solve them. As an individual, and a leader of women in the church and society, I

---

<sup>245</sup> The chairperson of Women's programme in the Presbyterian Church, during interviews on 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2009.

<sup>246</sup> The pastor of Ruyumba parish during interviews on 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2009.

<sup>247</sup> Margaret Snyder and Mary Tadesse. 1995. p 181.

feel very frustrated due to the powerlessness that affects women. There is complete lack of control and ownership of property by women and yet they are the producers.<sup>248</sup>

The pastor's view is that poverty among women is mostly caused by a low level of education resulting from a patriarchal culture that prefers a boy child to a girl child as seen in chapter three of this dissertation. He commented:

Poverty, cultural practices and stereotypes about women are the key factors that affect women and girls' education in this area. Many children who start primary education drop out in the course before reaching standard six. Many of those who do is because their parents cannot afford... many girls also end up employed in domestic work in town where they do mostly household girls jobs to support themselves and support their parents.<sup>249</sup>

However, the pastor observed that nowadays things are changing since the Rwandan government is committed to promoting gender equality and empowerment of women. There is a call for equal treatment among children. Yet, Hamilton notes that although legal/institutional barriers have been lifted to enable more girls to go to school, dropout rates are still higher in primary and secondary school for girls than boys because education in Rwanda is not free and families choose to educate sons rather than daughters.<sup>250</sup> The literacy rate among women is also lower than for men. Therefore, women's low income level is caused by low access to remunerated employment, and low education level.

#### ***5.4.2 Focus group Discussions' Response***

The assertion of Babbie and Mouton that, "Focus groups are useful because they tend to allow a space in which people may get together and create meaning among themselves, rather than individually",<sup>251</sup> supports the need to hold a conversation with people in order to discover their thoughts and feelings. The way in which respondents will discuss the topic in groups should help to explore the issues under discussion in that they may complement each other and come up with strong responses.<sup>252</sup>

---

<sup>248</sup> The chairperson of Agaseke project during interview on 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2009.

<sup>249</sup> The pastor of Ruyumba parish during interviews on 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2009.

<sup>250</sup> Heather B Hamilton. Rwanda's Women: The Key to Reconstruction. *The Journal of Humanitarian Assistance*, May 10, 2000. <http://www.jha.ac/greatlakes/b001.htm>

<sup>251</sup> Babbie and Mouton . 2001. p 292.

<sup>252</sup> Stewart, D.W. and Shamdasani, P. N. 1990. *Focus Groups: Theory and Practice*. USA: SAGE Publications. pp 51-53,

The focus group discussions were around the themes of gender inequality in education, lack of property ownership, women's participation in the church, and the economic impact of Agaseke project in Ruyumba Parish.

#### *5.4.2.1. Gender Inequality in Education, Lack of Property Ownership*

In the focus group discussions, all the women agreed that women are poorer than men as a result of gender inequality. This includes low education and lack of property ownership. Out of fifteen women, only one finished her secondary school<sup>253</sup> and she is a teacher. Two women had reached high school and due to different reasons did not finish form six. Four women have trained in different skills like sewing and cooking. Six finished primary school only, and three did not go to school but they attended classes aimed at adult literacy so they know how to read and to write. It was noted that girl's education is still a secondary consideration to boys in Ruyumba area. This is because it is believed that boys have to grow up to be the providers of their families while girls have to get married to other clans.

For this reason, girls' education is not taken seriously, and therefore is easily compromised in many rural homesteads/families. Murekatete Jackeline (2) simply shared her experience as follows:

I did not have a chance to go to school like my brothers because my parents did not have enough money to educate all of us. They chose my brother because boys are important. Rather I was told to get married, when I finished my grade eight they started to look for a husband for me. If I was educated I could be employed but here I am suffering from poverty.<sup>254</sup>

Mukamana Beathe (1) feels that she was deprived of an opportunity to finish her schooling because she was of lesser value than her brothers; she was told by her parents that she should stay at home and help her mother in domestic chores. She recounted her story in this way:

I very well remember while my sister and I would stay home due to school fees for long time yet my parents were very careful to ensure that my brother never stayed at home due to fees. And even when we were at home for holidays or after school my brothers were always reminded and pressurised to revise his school notes in order to perform well. But my sister and I had to help our mother in the household chores and only study when we have finished the duties assigned to us.<sup>255</sup>

---

<sup>253</sup> The Rwandan education system is six years for primary schools and six year for secondary schools.

<sup>254</sup> Jackeline Murekatete, married woman's group discussion on 3<sup>rd</sup> November 2009.

<sup>255</sup> Beatha Mukamana, single mother's group discussion on 3<sup>rd</sup> November 2009.

The second cause of poverty among women in Ruyumba parish is lack of property ownership. In the interviews and group discussions carried out, all respondents indicated that property ownership is crucial issue especially after the genocide where more than fifty-four percent of households are headed by women, as was seen in chapter two. Girls' education, as seen above, is the key to empowerment and the ability to overcome poverty. It addresses the causes of the experiences of vulnerability. The following experiences were shared by women during group discussions. A limited or complete lack of economic power for women makes them victims of oppression, exploitation, marginalisation and discrimination, resulting in gross injustices they experience just because they are women. Marthe Mukasine, (3) revealed her story:

I am left with five children whom I take care of, and at least once in a week I have to visit my husband at Gitarama prison and take to him the cooked and uncooked food so that he can survive since there they don't get enough food. However, I cannot decide to sell any of our property even when in need without his authorisation although he has been away for a long time, he still has power over me.<sup>256</sup>

This shows that after working hard on agricultural production and bearing and rearing children a woman does not own valuables like land and livestock. She only owns gourds, pots, baskets and other fragile things. Furthermore, a woman's life is wholly controlled by a man and she has no say over her property. This illustrates the effects of the Rwandan patriarchal system, as discussed in chapter two.

Jeane Kamariza (1) is a survivor of genocide and was left with her two daughters. Her son was killed together with her husband. Despite the good relationship she had with her husband, she was not officially married. Therefore she cannot claim her husband's property. She laments:

My in-laws decided to prevent me from owning the property of my husband. Our house was destroyed but I could rebuild it and have somewhere to stay and own my husband's land. But I cannot since it says that our marriage is not recognised and beside I don't have sons to claim their father's property. I have only daughters who do not count in society consequently they do not have rights on the property.<sup>257</sup>

---

<sup>256</sup> Marthe Mukasine, prisoners' wives' group discussion on 5<sup>th</sup> November 2009.

<sup>257</sup> Jeane Kamariza, a single women's group discussion on 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2009.

Land is crucial to survival in Rwanda, as ninety percent of the population earn their livelihood from agriculture.<sup>258</sup> Therefore, without access and rights to land women have no way of securing food for themselves and their children. Consequently, many turn to high-risk behaviour to support their families. To this, Oduyoye affirms that:

Property and inheritance regulations seem to become more and more intent on marginalising women except the few who can go to court. And today, the category of women called ‘widow’ is often a disinherited species, sharing no part of the legacy of her father or her husband, and unable to have saved or acquired property because she was busy being a traditional wife spending on spouse, children, and extended family.<sup>259</sup>

Kanzayire Mediatrice (2) is a primary school teacher who had the following observation to make:

While low level or lack of education puts women down, those of us who are ‘educated’ are still oppressed by the institutional structures that are so patriarchal. It is dehumanising when a woman is employed and contributes to the economy of the family and yet her contribution is not given due regard. Even in families where men and women are employed, men have the upper hand in decision-making. The wife is asked to bring her salary so that her husband can decide what to do with it. It is injustice that women and men work hard together but at the end of the day, all belong to the men alone and the same woman must seek permission to use money for the family while man reports to nobody even if he misuses it. At work place women must work hard to prove their capacities, when it means promotions for men it is obvious while for women have to work extra in order to prove herself. I wonder if the policies and laws which ensure the equality of men and women real are implemented. This made me to doubt what people call gender equality.<sup>260</sup>

In connection with this, Haddad points out a spatial division between the public and private world of men. This spatial division results only in the productive roles of women being valued, while their reproductive and community managing work is either ignored or undervalued because it is seen as natural and non-productive.<sup>261</sup> She notes “...in contrast to women, men’s work is valued either directly through remuneration or indirectly through status and political power.”<sup>262</sup>

---

<sup>258</sup> <http://rwandagateway.org> : accessed on 5<sup>th</sup> November 2009.

<sup>259</sup> Mercy Amba Oduyoye. 1995. *Daughters of Anowa: African women and Patriarchy*. Maryknoll: New York. p152.

<sup>260</sup> Mediatrice, Kanzayire, married women’s group discussion on 3<sup>rd</sup> November 2009.

<sup>261</sup> Beverley Haddad. 2000. p 116.

<sup>262</sup> Beverley, Haddad. 2000 p 116.

#### 5.4.2.2 Women's Participation in Church Leadership

In all group discussions women pointed out that in Ruyumba Parish women are gifted with different skills of leadership and their involvement is seen in the liturgy. They devote their talents to the choirs and many other activities of the church. According to the pastor of the Ruyumba Parish, women serve as elders, deacons and evangelists. Those who have gifts and feel that they can preach are given the chance to take *Duhugurane* training. This is the programme of the Church set for training of the laity so that they can learn how to prepare sermons and deliver them. The following paragraphs echoed women's experiences in the church in general and in Ruyumba parish in particular.

Odette Nyiranshuti (2) is an elder in Ruyumba Parish. She belongs to the *Abatwaramucyo* choir, and is a Sunday school teacher. On many occasions she has preached at the Sunday service.

I feel I participate fully in my parish activities; I am preacher, elder, and teacher of the Sunday school. I feel happy to be a member of this church because it recognises my talents and give me the opportunities to exercise it. I received *Duhugurane* training; therefore, I do not feel humiliated when I am in the pulpit preaching the word of God.<sup>263</sup>

Susan Iradukunda (3) is gifted in organising fundraising. She feels that the Church recognises her gift at times that it is required. She put it in this way:

Although I cannot preach, I do the work of deacon which includes visiting the sick and elderly people, and others who are in need but mostly I feel I am gifted in organising fundraising. And when that time comes I am given an opportunity to exercise my gift and it works well. I feel my talents are considered by my Church.<sup>264</sup>

However, during group discussions some women pointed out that although the Church structures allow women to participate in the leadership, there are some men who discourage women from participating in the leadership responsibilities. This was narrated by Vestine Mutuyimana in the following words:

I know my husband does not like to see me talking in public. He is always arguing that culture demands women not to talk when men are there, and he emphasises his argument by biblical facts that even the bible says that women should keep quiet in public sphere.<sup>265</sup>

---

<sup>263</sup> Odette Nyiranshuti, married women's group discussion on 3<sup>rd</sup> November 2009.

<sup>264</sup> Susan Iradukunda, prisoners' wives' group discussion on 5<sup>th</sup> November 2009.

<sup>265</sup> Vestine Mutuyimana, married women's group discussion on 3<sup>rd</sup> November 2009.



Mutuyimana's story is common among married women whose husbands deny them the opportunities to express their talents as much as the Church promotes them. As women are seen as the property of their husbands, they are oppressed and dehumanised by their husbands.

Other groups of women who feel that they are denied participation in the Church include divorced women, single women, and the second wife in a polygamous marriage. Even if the Presbyterian Church is given credit for its positive attitudes towards women, some claim to be denied their participation in the church leadership. Marie Kagaju (1) lamented:

I got a child out of marriage, I stay home with my parents, I believe I confessed the sin of adultery that I committed during my ignorance days but I am still excluded in the activities of the church although I feel that I am called to serve God. I was only recruited in Agaseke Project because of my talent of weaving; they needed me to teach them otherwise I am not considered as a full member of the Church.<sup>266</sup>

This discrimination is also expressed in the *Abatwaramucyo* organisation. The categories of women listed above cannot be a member of the women's organisation. It is said that the women's organisation can be a strong foundation for women's liberation, but at the same time, it can be a source of their own oppression.<sup>267</sup> Haddad points out that within the women's movement itself there are some oppressive forces, which work against each other, and there are also some aspects of women movements that are problematic to women's liberation.<sup>268</sup>

#### 5.4.2.3 Economic Empowerment through Agaseke Project

The women in Ruyumba are not passively waiting for God's miracle. Through *Abatwaramucyo* organisation's activities, women encourage each other to work hard for the well being of their families. Haddad argues that "...networks of religious women such as the *Manyano* movement are the key sites of survival practice and a place where poor and marginalised women are taking control of their lives in an attempt to alleviate their lived

---

<sup>266</sup> Marie Kagaju, single women's group discussion on 3<sup>rd</sup> November 2009.

<sup>267</sup> Sicily Mbura Muriithi. 2009. Vulnerability and capability in Kenya: Towards an African women's public theology, PhD Thesis. University of KwaZulu-Natal, School of Religion and Theology. p. 240.

<sup>268</sup> Beverley Haddad. 2004. "The Manyano movement in South Africa: Site of struggle survival and resistance". In *Agenda*, No 61. p.11.

reality – poverty.”<sup>269</sup> Similarly, Brandel notes that women’s organisations “...are a stabilising force and it gives women the confidence in themselves and faith to move mountains.”<sup>270</sup> Furthermore, Mayout points out that the cooperative method for women’s empowerment has been successful in providing income/credit and developing women’s consciousness in most African countries.<sup>271</sup>

It is in this regard, twenty-five women from *Abatwaramucyo* organisation who were gifted in weaving baskets decided to embark on the Agaseke project. To be able to start this project everyone contributed an amount of 10.000 Frw (20\$)<sup>272</sup> as starting capital. The chairperson of Agaseke shared how the idea of the Agaseke project started:

Despite women in the Ruyumba area having acquired less formal education, they are involved in activities that generate income for their dependents. Even if women have not gone to school, most are involved in small scale businesses of selling tomatoes and vegetables and earn something to help their families. Women of Ruyumba parish are involved in income generation projects in order to overcome poverty and dependence. The idea came when I was invited to attend church seminars on poverty reduction strategies organised by CFD. In this workshop we were many women from different parishes of the Presbyterian Church. We were told that the church has invited us to think for ourselves as women who are the majority in the country and in the church on how to alleviate poverty. And the speakers encouraged us to build our ideas on what women are already capable of doing. Coming back I was very excited to meet women in my parish. We sat down and help our pastor we came up with Agaseke Project. It is a project which give us income and which does not require academic expertise and a lot of money to start with. Since then, we selected twenty-five women who are gifted in weaving baskets and willing to contribute 10.000 Frw (20 dollars) as capital to start a project. With the support of CFD some of us were training from Gahaya Link of how to weave Agaseke products in a modern way so that it can compete in the market. The parish has accommodated our project. Today Agaseke Project has increased in number. Today it counts forty-five women who are committed to weaving baskets and gain income.<sup>273</sup>

Through Agaseke project women are able to assist their households while secondarily using their additional income to assist their parish. The discussion now turns to examine the economic, social and spiritual impact of the Agaseke on women’s lives

### *Economic impact*

---

<sup>269</sup> Beverley Haddad. 2003. p 445.

<sup>270</sup> Syrier M. Brandel. 1962. *Black Women in Search of God* London: Lutherworth. p.104.

<sup>271</sup> Linda Mayout. 1986. *All are not equal:African women in Cooperatives*. London. p.14.

<sup>272</sup> This is not enough capital to start such project but since some women were already doing this projects they had the basic materials to start with.

<sup>273</sup> The chairperson of Agaseke Project during interviews on 2nd November 2009.

As noted already, the Agaseke project is an income generation project. All the three group discussions demonstrated how women benefit from it and how their lives have changed since they decided to be involved in this project. The following table is an example of how the many baskets the women can produce and what they gain in a month in US dollars.

Women produce on average six baskets per month. Below is an example of baskets exported to the USA, where women are paid US \$20 per set of baskets.

|                             | Amount paid                  |
|-----------------------------|------------------------------|
| Producer (woman weaver)     | US \$20 (US \$120 per month) |
| Local trader (Gahaya Links) | 35%                          |
| US importer                 | 35%                          |
| US retailer                 | 35% (sale price: US \$75)    |

For Jeane Kamariza (1), life has dramatically changed. She was happy with her work of weaving baskets. She shared her experience with the group:

My life was very bad after the death of my husband during the genocide. Besides, I lost everything which belonged to us. I was poor, hopeless, homeless and landless, I wished to own something but I could not. Later I joined the Agaseke Project, now I can make some money out of it; I have few cents in my hands. I am proud because the money I have earned from my work is mine. You know, I can feed my kids and educate them.<sup>274</sup>

Flavia Mukantamati (1) is a single mother. Before joining Agaseke project she was weaving baskets at home and selling them on her own but she was not gaining enough to survive as she is today. She said:

My life has completely changed ever since I joined the Agaseke project for weaving. Before, I used to earn something like 3,000 Frw out of my crafts in a month. I used to produce while at home and this is because I was not having bargaining power. I was facing a lot of problems which is lack of some basic necessities of life. It was not easy to survive based on my life demands which were far costlier than my earning. I had to look for various casual jobs in order to make ends meet. However ever since I joined the project, I earn depending on the quality and quantity of work I produce. I am forced to produce as many good quality products

---

<sup>274</sup> Jeane Kamariza, single women's group discussions on 3<sup>rd</sup> November 2009.

as I can in a specific period of time in order to earn more. The saying that 'time is money' works for me.<sup>275</sup>

In Agaseke Project, women weave together but each is paid according to her production. She gains as much as she produces. They put their products together and export to Gahaya Links which pays them back according to what they have produced. This encourages them to work hard and to be responsible for the work they are producing.

Mukabarisa Chantal's husband has been in jail since 1994. It was very hard for her to raise four children on her own and support her husband in jail, but today she can manage to meet her expenses out of her crafts. She recounted her story in this way:

I have no specific amount of money, I earn depending on the performance of my work. However I earn between 30,000 and 60,000 Frw<sup>276</sup> a month. Despite the hard time I passed through I am now grateful to Agaseke Project and the church for the efforts engaged in starting the project. I am delighted to be one of the women in the project. This is because of the good fruits we are gaining from it.<sup>277</sup>

Economic empowerment would make it possible for girls and women to have a choice of ways in which to support themselves and their families. Mukashema Joyce is married. Before joining Agaseke project she was vulnerable since she was totally dependent on her husband in everything she needed including soap and salt. However, today she earns some money out of her works and she contributes to her family's expenses. Her husband is now happy and considers her as a helper not as consumer. Mukashema Joyce (2) narrated:

I can now buy some of the basic needs without waiting for the husband to provide me with everything. I gain much respect from my husband who used to see me as a useless person in terms of production. It had never happened to me that my husband can take care of the baby but now when I go for a weaving meeting, he volunteers to stay with my baby so that I can work hard to gain more.<sup>278</sup>

The success of this business has not only provided economic prosperity to society, it has provided psychological confidence to the women who are involved. This confidence, sometimes called motivation, is what is needed for any business venture to succeed. A rural woman feels so happy to see her basket being admired and sold on the international market.

---

<sup>275</sup> Flavia Mukantamati, single women's group discussions on 3<sup>rd</sup> November 2009.

<sup>276</sup> One dollar is equivalent of 500 Frw therefore Chantal earns between 60 to 120 dollars a month.

<sup>277</sup> Chantal Mukabarisa, prisoners' wives group discussions on 5<sup>th</sup> November 2009.

<sup>278</sup> Joyce Mukashema, married women group discussions on 3<sup>rd</sup> November 2009.

This is a great compliment to a person that society had told was 'useless'. In addition, women have managed to check the dependency syndrome that has been their undoing for so long.<sup>279</sup>

### *Social impact*

Agaseke project has served as a place where women meet and tell stories and share experiences outside their differences. It is a place where women's liberation can take place.

Agnesta Kagoyire (1) is a genocide widow who was helpless and hopeless after the genocide.

She testified that:

Before joining Agaseke Project, I was lonely and had hatred in my heart. I did not have peace and no one could approach me for a help. We meet here to weave and train each other. We also financially support each other whenever we can. The project has brought our product recognition and hence more people continue to buy them. On our own, we would not have achieved what we are now enjoying. As we weave we share our happiness and difficulties and our problems seem smaller since people offer to help you.<sup>280</sup>

This activity brings peace and reconciliation in the community so that it not only reduces poverty but it also builds unity, which is a major need in Rwanda. At Ruyumba parish, women in Agaseke project have time to share their stories while they are weaving and they get healed. The 1994 genocide has challenged Rwandan society; people still have fresh wounds in their heart. Many of the women lost their families and others have husbands in prison for their participation in the killing. It is not easy to make these people meet even if they are Christians but because of the benefits of Agaseke Project, they meet and do the work together with love and peace.

This project has become a forum in which women genocide survivors and wives of perpetrators can sit together, plan together and produce together on a sustainable basis. They do this, as the story goes, because one day they all got tired of crying and decided to take control of their lives, and their futures. They chose peace and reconciliation. They chose lives of sisterhood. This is a testimony to the people who see them. During our group discussions one respondent testified that she was a Muslim and she became a Christian because of the love and solidarity she has seen among women in Agaseke project.

---

<sup>279</sup> Elaine Zuckerman. 2001. p 34.

<sup>280</sup> Agnesta Kagoyire, single women group discussions on 3rd November 2009.

## *Spiritual Impact*

Besides the economic and social impact, Agaseke project has a spiritual aspect for Christians. It is used during worship services to collect offerings. Furthermore, it is used to decorate Christmas trees in the Church and even in Christian homes. Therefore, women of Ruyumba Parish often donate Agaseke products to the church as gifts. They do it based on what was happening in Old Testament. “All women who had ability with their hands, brought and scarlet stuff and fine twined linen...” (Exodus 35: 25). When the Israelites were making a tent for the Lord, women offered what they made with their hands. Therefore, they used their skills and gifts to serve the Lord. This makes women feel that whatever they are doing is blessed by God, and they carry on with faith and hope. Related to this, David Hallman argues that faith is God’s demand to our intense personal engagement but it would be a dry faith commitment without hope.<sup>281</sup> As women struggle with their daily bread, they hope for accomplishment. This hope is expressed when sharing stories and praying together. The women begin their work by praying and sharing the Word of God. This is a precious moment according to Monique Kamanzi ( 3) who recounted that:

Although, I attend church fellowship every Sunday, I was always frustrated by my husband’s participation in killing. However, the time of prayers we have in our project has really helped me to share my pain and burden. I know God is the God of love and he has a good plan for him. I thank my sisters who stand with me and encourage me to share with them what I had in my heart. Agaseke project is a space of expression of our feelings, and mostly sharing our experiences as women and we carry on life with courage and hope.<sup>282</sup>

### ***5.4.3 The summary of the Three Focus Group Discussions***

The members of the three focus groups were able to come together, discuss the identified issues and brainstorm together possible solutions. While the discussions were geared towards data collection, individual experiences shared in a group discussion were helpful to individual persons as they related their own experiences to each other’s experiences. Although the focus group discussions were carried out at different times with women of different marital status, a number of issues and concerns were similar. In the section below, I discuss the three key issues that were identified and prioritised in the three focus groups.

---

<sup>281</sup> David G. Hallman. 2000. *Spiritual values for earth community*. Geneva:WCC. pp 116-117.

<sup>282</sup> Monique Kamanzi, prisoners’ women group discussions on 5<sup>th</sup> November 2009.

### *Gender and Poverty*

The three groups acknowledged that poverty was a serious issue that hinders women's development. The root causes of it were identified as the 1994 genocide and the patriarchal system that favours gender inequality. All groups considered education as the key to the quality of life for women. They noticed also that the lack of property ownership dehumanises women and results in dependence on their men. All women claimed that the new government laws which provide equality should be implemented in a fair and equitable manner for both women and men, to help strengthen and protect the rights of women and girls. In this regard, the study has shown that women are not aware of the laws and rules that liberate them. This is because access to information is very limited for most women, especially in rural areas. Poverty prevents them from accessing information. Moreover, skewed chore distribution within the household is a primary cause of women being overloaded with work. This limits the time they would otherwise devote to other important things.

All three groups identified what they think can be done on the issue of women and poverty. According to them, the first strategy to develop should be to promote women's self-confidence so as to make them more competitive and more visible. It is also important to exploit women's positive capacity and counter those negative prejudices directed to them. Concerted efforts need to be made to educate and train women. All barriers should be removed to enable their access to education at all levels, so they can be equipped with the required qualifications to compete for the highest working positions. Affirmative action should be undertaken to narrow those gaps resulting from earlier discriminatory education systems. Advocacy would help political decision-makers and the whole population to become more gender sensitive.

### *Women's Participation in the Church's Leadership*

While the focus group 2 - composed of married women - praised the Church for being inclusive in its leadership, some women in group 1 - composed of single mothers and widows felt excluded by the rules of the Church. This is not surprising because the Rwandan woman is regarded as having worth through her husband. Single women are not counted as important. Feminist theologians are against this kind of perception of women in the Church of Christ. Marital status should make no difference. In the body of Christ, everyone is considered and counted as a full human being created in God's image. Denise Ackermann

reflects on this, as she states that Christian teaching on humanity is contradictory. On the one hand it has consistently confirmed woman's equality with man based on being in the image of God (Gen 1:27). On the other hand, Christian practice has proved otherwise.<sup>283</sup> African women theologians also criticise African culture that disregards the humanity of women.

### *The impact of Agaseke Project on Women's Lives*

All the three focus groups agreed that the Agaseke project has changed women's lives positively. All the women now have a bank account in the local community bank. All the women can pay their contribution to the local mutual health insurance fund and they cater for the family's basic needs. In this regard the group (2) of married women has indicated that because of the Agaseke project they have gained economic power. Consequently, they have gained the respect of their husbands who used to see them as useless and consumers only. Furthermore, for the group (1) of single mothers and the group (3) composed of prisoners' wives the Agaseke project has become a space of expressing and sharing their experience of poverty as a result of the 1994 genocide. It has played the important role of unification and reconciliation. Moreover, all groups emphasised that the Agaseke project empowered them spiritually. All women shared that before joining the Agaseke Project it was difficult to give tithes and offerings at their church. However, they are grateful that out of their labours they can contribute to the development of the church as well.

## **5.5 Data analysis**

The aim of data analysis is to transform information (data) into an answer for the original research question. Content analysis as a tool of data analysis would help to analyse the content of the transcripts from the focus groups and in-depth interviews. The analysis of the data using content analysis can help to go deeper into the meaning of women's feelings and understandings of their experiences in regard to the Agaseke Project and the church mission.

I used a narrative analysis method which is based on the notion of life experience as narrative. Narrative analysis seeks to "...reveal the way in which people construct life

---

<sup>283</sup> Denise Ackermann. 1991. "Being Woman, being Human" in Denise Ackermann, Jonathan A. Draper and Emma Mashinini eds. p 98.



narratives around particular experiences.”<sup>284</sup> It has been described as a narrative theology in which African women, sitting in a circle around a campfire tell their stories while others listen. They proceed from narrating the story to analysing it, to show how the various actors in the story see themselves, interact with others, and view their own agency in life as a whole.<sup>285</sup> Oduyoye argues that “...the normative role of stories in Africa’s oral corpus, and the role of story in biblical theology, gives women the paradigm for their theological reflection.”<sup>286</sup> In agreement with her, Kanyoro emphasises that “...stories help to make connections between faith and action because they make use of experience and reflections as the intervals of connection.”<sup>287</sup>

As was seen in chapter three, the research has shown that poverty is not neutral; it affects women more than it affects men, and women suffer disproportionately from the effects of an unjust patriarchal economic system. They are less likely to be able to find employment for decent wages, and become dependent on men for their livelihood.<sup>288</sup> The fact that traditionally women have more responsibility for child-raising lessens their opportunities for economic activity. Most women do unpaid household work in addition to any economic activity they may be able to participate in. In the case of rural households, this is often in addition to caring for fields and vegetable gardens. In the past, legislation has discriminated against women in terms of education and economic opportunities, while culture continues to do this. The majority of women remain on the margins of society economically.<sup>289</sup>

Though it was not easy for women in Agaseke Project to define what gender inequality is, the study has shown that most women experience it in their daily lives. The responses from the in-depth interviews and in focus group discussions has shown that women understand that they are poorer compared to men. They pointed out different causes of poverty among women, particularly women in the Ruyumba area. These include consequences of the 1994

---

<sup>284</sup> Martin Blanche, Terre & Kevin, Durrheim (eds) .2006. *Research in Practice. Applied methods for the Social Sciences* (3rd ed., Cape Town: University of Cape Town press, p.561.

<sup>285</sup> Isabel Apawo Phiri and Sarojini Nadar. 2006. What’s in a name? Forging a theoretical framework for African women theologies. *Journal of Constructive Theology: Gender, Religion and Theology in Africa*, pp 13-14.

<sup>286</sup> Mercy Amba Oduyoye. 2001. p 11.

<sup>287</sup> Musimbi R.A. Kanyoro. 2002. *Introducing feminist cultural hermeneutics: an African perspective*. London : Sheffield Academic Press. p 23.

<sup>288</sup> The Diakonia Council of Churches. 2006. *The Oikos Journey: A Theological on the Economic Crisis in South Africa*. Durban: The Diakonia Council of Churches. p.17.

<sup>289</sup> The Diakonia Council of Churches. 2006, p.18.

genocide, gender inequalities resulting in low education among women and the lack of property ownership.

In agreement with my previous discussion in chapter three on women and poverty, this study has shown that women are poor because of gender inequality. Women are less likely to be considered for education, and as a result they are not as skilled for employment as men are. In chapter three I also noted that the lack of economic independence dehumanises a woman and violates her rights. The myth of the male as primary breadwinner predominates even where the realities suggest otherwise. The prisoners' wives in Ruyumba parish run the family business in the absence of their husbands and they don't have access to the property. While they carry a great deal of responsibility, they still cannot decide what to do in the absence of their husbands.

During interviews with Synder and Tadesse, Maude Mugisha of Uganda recounted that "...if there was just one thing they could give to their fellow women, it could be economic independence."<sup>290</sup> She spoke especially of young women and girls in Uganda who are threatened by the AIDS crisis because of dependence on men and older men. As a result, girls are four times more likely to be affected by AIDS than boys of the same age.<sup>291</sup> Lack of access, or limited access to and control of property in the society by women is identified as a core factor in persistent poverty among women. For the majority of them, poverty remains the main reason for women's dehumanisation. It emerges as the main factor that makes women remain in abusive relationships and is the main reason behind the gross lack of resources.

It is only in church that women try to find refuge and consolation for their frustration and oppression. Haddad calls this a theology of survival, where women literally attribute their survival to God.<sup>292</sup> After the genocide, a large number of Rwandan women are not able to explain easily how they survive the challenges of poverty. Thus, they conclude that it is God who provides when there is a need. However, the research has found that women can use their natural potential to overcome the vulnerable situations in which they are living. As I have noted in chapter four, the women involved in the Agaseke project can now contribute to

---

<sup>290</sup> Synder M and Tadesse, M. 1995. p 183.

<sup>291</sup> Margaret Synder and Mary, Tadesse.1995. p 183.

<sup>292</sup> Beverley Haddad 2003, pp 427-450.

the household expenditures. They are able to buy some of the basic needs without waiting for the husband's approval or disapproval. In this way, the rural woman has gained much respect from her husband who used to see her as a useless person in terms of production.<sup>293</sup> Even those who are not formally educated can learn skills that help them to feed their families. Furthermore, they feel that they are not passive and helpless but they are able to survive from their own hard work.

## 5.6 The challenges

Women in Agaseke Projects are very thankful to God and to the Presbyterian Church for empowering them to fight against poverty and begin to experience life more abundantly. For them the church stands as guardian and protector. *Itorero ni umubyeyi* means 'the church is a parent'. Nevertheless, the study echoed the women's challenges which need to be addressed in order to improve the Agaseke project.

- Women need regular training in order to meet market demands. This is because the designs and forms of Agaseke product keep changing according to the customers' desire.
- Women need study visits to other women's groups that are involved in the similar projects.
- Since the project is growing, women need leadership and management skills training.
- Women wish to have more markets where they can compare the prices. They feel that Gahaya Links does not give enough according to the work of weaving baskets which needs precision and patience.
- They need the women's desk of the Presbyterian Church to come to the grassroots level in order to interact with women in the parishes. Women expressed the need for gender equality awareness programmes to include family planning in order to overcome poverty among women in Ruyumba parish.

---

<sup>293</sup> Elaine Zuckerman. 2001. p 35.

## **5.7 Conclusion**

This chapter combined two sections; firstly it discussed the methodology used to collect data. The narrative method was a helpful method for this study to help researchers to listen to women's experiences of poverty. In this section, it was pointed out that in-depth interviews and focus group discussions were suitable for this study. They provided the opportunity to listen and observe the participants' responses and reactions during interviews and group discussions. It was argued in this section that the sample of three leader's in-depth interviews and three focus group discussions were able to provide the necessary information to understand the experiences of women who are involved in Agaseke Project in Ruyumba parish.

Secondly, the chapter dealt with the presentation of research findings and analysis of the responses from leaders who relate to Agaseke project. I analysed responses from the three focus group discussions about the understanding of gender and poverty, church and women's empowerment, and the impact of Agaseke project on women's lives. The research has echoed the perception that women are poorer than men in Rwanda in general and in particularly in Ruyumba area because of gender inequality. This has created women's dependency on men, which in turn affects them economically, spiritually and socially. The study has shown that the Church has engaged in responding to women's poverty by empowering them to start income generation projects. The creation of small scale projects is encouraged. However, the study has also shown that the church has not yet challenged gender inequality which denies women's full humanity in the society and in the church. This was confirmed by women who indicated that they felt neglected and oppressed by their husbands and brothers in Christ. Nevertheless, women in Ruyumba have resisted this oppression when they decided to stand and embark on the Agaseke project. They are grateful for the ways it has changed their lives positively.

The field research discovered some areas in which the church's effort is needed to empower women to experience life more abundantly. These challenges will be indicated in the next chapter where the study will discuss the church's vision of women's empowerment as the mission of God to the world.

## CHAPTER SIX

### TOWARD THE CHURCH'S VISION OF WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT AS MISSION OF GOD TO THE WORLD

#### 6.1 Introduction

The previous chapter identified the methodology of research and discussed the research findings. It analysed the responses from selected leaders in relation to Agaseke project and from the three focus group discussions about the understanding of gender and poverty, church and women's empowerment, and the impact of Agaseke project on women's lives. The research has shown that women are poor in Rwanda because of gender inequality which was aggravated by the 1994 genocide. However, the Rwandan women do not sit idly expecting handouts through charity organisations or the government. Rather they use their potential and gifts to overcome poverty. Nevertheless, this requires empowerment from different people including the Church. The study has shown that the Presbyterian Church has made efforts to enhance women's capabilities in providing skills training. Additionally, the creation of small scale projects is encouraged.

This chapter will reflect on the question of whether the Presbyterian Church has done enough to empower women to experience life more abundantly. Drawing from the research findings, the chapter will suggest what the church's vision of women's empowerment could be, in terms of the mission of God to the world.

#### 6.2 Is the Presbyterian Church doing enough to empower women to experience life abundantly?

On one hand I do agree with the research findings show that the Church has played a significant role in empowering women through skills training in order to overcome poverty. On the other hand I also agree with Snyder and Tadesse who argue that "...economic empowerment means not just an increase in labour productivity or earning money but

controlling the products and income from that labour.”<sup>294</sup> Without this power, women’s status and the well-being of their families seldom improve. The study has shown that women do not have control over their income, even for those who supplement the income through small-scale projects. A persistent obstacle to women’s earning in Rwanda, as elsewhere, is the myth of the male breadwinner. Nowadays in Rwanda, many families are headed by a woman. Obviously it is women whose lives are most shaped by family obligations.

The Presbyterian Church is doing an important job in attempting to assist poor and marginalised women to become more robust, stronger and better able to achieve their own objectives. However, it is not enough for women’s liberation; more is needed to be done on the issue of gender justice for women’s full humanity. From the group discussions it was noted that gender inequality hinders women’s development. Women need power to control the household income and assets, otherwise whatever they earn is controlled by men and women continue to be oppressed.

Unfortunately, gender injustice is not happening outside of the Church’s life but within Christian families. In this regard, Isabel Phiri in her research *Domestic Violence in Christian Homes: a Durban Case Study* talks about economic violence as one of the forms of domestic violence faced by women in Christian’s homes. She notes that “...the abuser uses money to undermine the woman. He may spend most of the money on himself and only give her a small amount for the support of the family.”<sup>295</sup> This is affirmed by the experiences of women who were part of my study from Ruyumba parish. During group discussions the study has shown that women do not own property, and even their own salary is controlled by their husbands. This is confirmed by Abuom who argues that “...women in Africa as a group are less educated, earn less, own less, control less ...”<sup>296</sup> In attempting to locate this, Oduyoye suspects that traditions, mind-sets and attitudes go back generations and are reinforced by daily experiences. The source of the fear, anxiety and apprehension is that power will get into the hands of women.<sup>297</sup> During group discussions, women articulated that men feel threatened when women earn money, it is like their power has been taken away.

---

<sup>294</sup> Margaret Snyder and Mary, Tadesse. 1995. p 184.

<sup>295</sup> Isabel Apawo Phiri. 2000. “Domestic Violence in Christian Homes: A Durban Case Study” in *Journal of Constructive Theology*. vol.(6), 2. p 94.

<sup>296</sup> Agnes Abuom. 2001. p 115.

<sup>297</sup> Mercy Amba Oduyoye. 2001. “Transforming Power: Paradigms from the Novels of Bichi Emercheta in Nyambura J. Njoroge and Musa W Dube. *Talitha Cum! Theologies of African Women*: Pietermaritzburg : Cluster Publication. p 225.

As Oduyoye argues that “...those who lord power over others are naturally nervous about other people having access to powerful positions.”<sup>298</sup>

This patriarchal culture needs to be changed in favour of gender equality. The question then becomes ‘how do we break the chains of gender injustice within our Church and society to enable equal and just partnerships of women and men?’ Addressing this issue requires transformation on multiple levels. It needs to be done with critical reflection on the mission of the church in relation to women’s empowerment.

### **6.3 Renewal and Transformation of the Church Mission in Relation to Women’s Empowerment**

One of the main tasks of the mission of the church is to proclaim the reality of the Kingdom of God in the world. For the Church to fulfil this mission, it has to understand God’s will concerning issues of justice. Michelle Gonzalez, a feminist theologian, argues that authentic transformation of the *imago Dei* into an egalitarian model will never occur unless Christians radically transform their imagining of God.<sup>299</sup> As long as God is imaged exclusively as male, men will be viewed as powerful and closer to the divine.

In chapter three, I discussed how God is against injustice toward powerless people, including women. Moreover, Jesus confirmed this in His radical message of empowering women to be among his disciples during his ministry. Thus, if the Church was given God’s mission and since it is the body of Jesus Christ, then, it is called to be a witness and to further the Kingdom of God in the world. For this reason there is a need for a transformed church which moves away from hierarchy and embraces partnership. Planning for change within the church requires steps towards gender justice which privilege fairness and equity as a right for both women and men. This is achieved through the process of social transformation.<sup>300</sup>

In this regard, Rakoczy suggests three steps to achieve gender justice. The first step lies heavily on deconstructing and critiquing what has been adopted by the Church in its

---

<sup>298</sup> Mercy Amba. 2001. in Nyambura J. Njoroge and Musa W Dube. eds. p 225.

<sup>299</sup> Michelle Gonzalez. 2007. *Created in God’s Image: An Introduction to feminist Theological Anthropology*. Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books. p 164.

<sup>300</sup> World Alliance of Reformed Churches Researches. 2003. p 208.

theological life regarding the involvement of women in the Church.<sup>301</sup> This step critiques the absence and the silence of women in the Church. Gender equality places women at the centre stage of Church activities and also includes their participation at different levels of theological issues. The second step seeks to find other avenues that can alternate as a way forward to the development of gender equality. By committing to that, more opportunities will be created for women to participate in Church activities.<sup>302</sup> The third step calls for the reconstruction and reformulation of Church teachings to accommodate the plans of women in the development of the Church at large.<sup>303</sup> This demands the Church to revisit its prophetic mission as the voice of the voiceless.

In line with Rakoczy's suggested steps to achieve gender justice, the next section proposes visions for renewal and transformation of the church in relation to women's empowerment.

### ***6.3.1 Teaching as a Tool of Social Transformation***

To address the issue of women and power relations, there is a need for gender awareness. The Church should include gender issues in their teachings through seminars and workshops as well as during Christian fellowship, from the pulpit during Sunday services, or any other Christian gatherings.

In his PhD thesis '*Theology and education: the role of the church in education for social transformation: A Methodist contribution*', based on Freire's theory of educating for liberation, Kumalo argues that a liberatory education is one which brings about awareness to the situation of the oppressed and the one that speaks against domination of people.<sup>304</sup> This can be done through youth teaching, premarital teaching, couple's ministries, during sermons and other teaching opportunities. Kumalo suggests that the "...key to the church's ministry and empowerment of its members is the revival of an educational ministry that is both functional and liberating."<sup>305</sup> Education is a significant tool for social transformation in general but particularly in Rwanda. Kumalo emphasises that "...education with the goal of

---

<sup>301</sup> Susan Rakoczy. 2004. p 17.

<sup>302</sup> Susan Rakoczy. 2004. p 18.

<sup>303</sup> Susan Rakoczy. 2004. p 18.

<sup>304</sup> Simangaliso, R. Kumalo. 2005. "Theology of Education: The role of the Church in education for social transformation: A Methodist contribution". PHD Thesis. University of KwaZulu Natal. Pietermaritzburg Campus. pp34-38.

<sup>305</sup> Simangaliso R. Kumalo. 2005. p 107.



transformation leads to liberation.<sup>306</sup> Likewise, Malinga points out that church teaching must be an engendered teaching which addresses the gender inequality in the church. “The church teaching for transformation must encourage the full involvement of women in church ministry.”<sup>307</sup>

Moreover, gender issues should be included in church’s schools and colleges and institutions’ agendas. In connection to this Phiri argues in her article “Doing Theology as African Women” that:

Gender issues are not dealt with in most African theological institutions. Therefore most of trained clergy come out of theological college with an outdated Western perspective on gender issues. It is no wonder then that the clergy are sometimes in the forefront of opposing the inclusion of women in the leadership positions. Women who have not yet been exposed to gender issues in the church and society also become stumbling blocks to the inclusion of women in church leadership.<sup>308</sup>

This quotation poses a challenge to many African theological institutions including “Butare Theological Institute”, the ecumenical institution that trains clergy in Rwanda. Most Protestant clergy have been formed in this institution. However, gender issues are neglected in their curriculum. It tests the Presbyterian Church in Rwanda as the founder member of this institution. Consequently, as some pastors are not gender sensitive, they consider women as inferior - even not counted among their members. To illustrate this further, during interview with the chairperson of the women’s programme, she revealed to me how some male clergy in the Presbyterian Church do not consider women as important people in their parishes. She recounted the story of one pastor, educated with a Bachelor’s Degree in theology, who is moderator of Region Synod in Presbyterian Church:

Once we were in the synod counsel discussing about parish activities. One participant asked the reason why it was said that the members of such parish are moving away and the pastor of the parish answered with confidence that “there are only women and children who are leaving the church, otherwise my parish is fine”. I was shocked to hear this statement and I waited to hear the comment from the other members. To my disappointment there was no reaction. Of course afterward I intervened to challenge this pastor.<sup>309</sup>

---

<sup>306</sup> Simangaliso R. Kumalo. 2005. p. 200.

<sup>307</sup> P. Malinga. 2002. “Women in Church leadership: Co-option or transformation” in *Women in God’s image, PACSA*” Pietermaritzburg. vol 8. pp 3-5.

<sup>308</sup> Isabel Apawo Phiri. 1975. “Doing Theology as African Women” in John Parratt. ed. *A Reader in African Christian Theology*. London: S.P.C.K. p 53.

<sup>309</sup> Interview with the chairperson on 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2009.

It is not only Nyambura Njoroge who laments that her training as a pastor never equipped her to deal with social or denser issues. Most of the Rwandan Presbyterian clergy were trained to care for the souls without bodies.<sup>310</sup> Although the Presbyterian Church emphasises the education of its pastors, gender issues have been neglected in our training institutions. Consequently, the clergy use exclusive language in their speeches and deny women opportunities to act, and the space within which to act. This is done knowing full well that the constitution of the church advocates for gender equality. However, this is not being implemented.

Nevertheless, I do agree with Deepa Narayan and others who believe that the Church is in unique position to catalyse positive social change. The church can use its moral authority and ethical standards to influence how we should tackle the problems of poverty, injustice and gender inequality.<sup>311</sup> The Presbyterian Church as a church from the reformed tradition has the potential to be a transformative church. By transformative church I mean a church where ministries are liberating to both women and men. Its education must bring social, physical, economic and spiritual transformation to the lives of women and men as members of the church.

### **6.3.2 Retrieving Women's Stories in the Church**

Another important step the church can take in empowering women, as Phiri suggests, is the process of recreating and retrieving women's stories in the church so that they can become an integral part of the story of the church and of Africa as a whole.<sup>312</sup> This challenges the Presbyterian Church for not documenting women's stories during its centenary activities in August 2007. It is surprising to discover that women's works including the *Abatwaramucyo* organisation that started with missionaries are not recorded in the book written commemorating the hundred years of Presbyterian Church mission in Rwanda.<sup>313</sup> Surely, it is not that women did not participate in extending the mission of God in the land of Rwanda.

---

<sup>310</sup> Musimbi R.A. Kanyoro 2001. "Engendered Communal Theology: African Women's Contribution to the Theology in 21st Century" in Nyambura J Njoroge and Musa W Dube. eds *Talitha Cum! Theologies of African Women*. Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications. p 160.

<sup>311</sup> Deepa Narayan. 2001. "Voices of the Poor" in D.Belshaw, R. Calderisi and C. Sugden.eds. *Faith in Development: Partnership between the World Bank and the Churches of Africa*. Oxford: Regnum. p 47.

<sup>312</sup> Isabel Apawo Phiri.1975. in Parratt John. p 53.

<sup>313</sup> Elisee Musemakweli and William Willems. 2007. *Eglise Presbytérienne au Rwanda sa mission et son témoignage 1907 à 2007: Centième Anniversaire*. Bruxelles, Imprimerie N.DE JONGE.

However, their voices were not documented. Women are the majority in the church; they should not be made invisible, their contributions should be acknowledged. This motivates me to request that the Church increase the number of women who go for theological studies at all levels. Related to this, Kanyoro argues that trained women will be able to challenge the text of the Bible by subjecting the hermeneutics of critical analysis to the biblical text.<sup>314</sup> I have already mentioned in chapter three of this study the need for feminist cultural and biblical hermeneutics for women's liberation. Kanyoro adds that there is a hope that these trained women pastors will be strong pillars for establishing relationships of trust and mutuality with women in the congregations. Moreover they will be able to talk about the reality of women's experiences in their sermons and therefore be able to make a connection between church, home and society.<sup>315</sup> I agree with Kanyoro's idea that theological training can equip Presbyterian women to challenge gender injustice for social transformation.

### ***6.3.3 Women as Transformation Agents***

I have said in chapter one that the ABCD model of development rests on the idea of the recognition of people's gifts and capabilities as available assets of community. It values human dignity, and demands individuals to engage in positive action for transformation. However, it was also said in chapter three that because of patriarchal culture, women have internalised inferiority to men, creating in them attitudes of self denial.

In this section, I want to emphasise that unless women stand and fight for their liberation no one can liberate them fully. Freire argues that it is an indisputable fact that the oppressed should struggle for their self-liberation. But he insists that this involvement should come from their conviction that they must fight for their liberation.<sup>316</sup> Once they are convinced, the first radical requirement in entering the struggle is to regain first their humanity by getting rid of the image of the oppressors that they have internalized.<sup>317</sup> According to his point of view, oppressed people must first attain the inner freedom from the oppressor and become again human, and then they can start the struggle as human.<sup>318</sup> In doing so they are arousing their

---

<sup>314</sup> Musimbi R.A. Kanyoro 2001. "Engendered Communal Theology: African Women's Contribution to the Theology in 21st Century" in Nyambura J Njoroge and Musa W Dube, eds. p.160.

<sup>315</sup> Musimbi R.A. Kanyoro 2001. "Engendered Communal Theology: African Women's Contribution to the Theology in 21st Century" in Nyambura J Njoroge and Musa W Dube, eds. p161.

<sup>316</sup> Paulo Freire .1996. p 49.

<sup>317</sup> Paulo Freire. 1996. p 50.

<sup>318</sup> Paulo Freire. 1996. p 50.

consciousness of their own dignity. This encourages them to take a constructive part in society.<sup>319</sup> In this way oppressed people begin to opt consciously for their own rights and their own future, which is the future of all, instead of opting in an alienated manner for their oppressors and their projects.

In this regard, Rwandan women have to stand and take a step to say NO to the injustice. They need to name evils and pain, cry out for help, and lament to God for humanity's restoration. Nyambura states that lamentation helps to face fears and drives the denouncing of evil forces confronting us. It helps us to take action in the name of justice and wholeness. She notes that:

Lamentation to God gives me a theological voice that comes out of my inner being, a voice that gives testimony to what I believe or what I do not believe. It paves the way for me to begin a journey of self-discovery, healing and spirituality of resistance, of not giving up and of transformation, if I care to pay attention to what I hear coming out of my inner being. It enables me to pay attention to others that might be in similar circumstances or in worse situations.<sup>320</sup>

Today, women are struggling to find their rightful place. They are trying to open ways for greater participation in the life of the Church, especially in the decision-making processes.<sup>321</sup> Nevertheless, the heads of churches are predominantly men and in many Churches women still experience oppression, humiliation and are denied the opportunities to express their gifts as fully human beings.

However, women need self-confidence and determination in whatever they are doing in order to liberate themselves. As Freire indicates, freedom is a struggle; it is not a gift but it happens through reflection and action that leads to the liberation process.<sup>322</sup> Therefore, "...the transformation of society does not exist by chance but is a product of human action. Just as objective social reality exists not by chance, but as the product of human action, so it is not transformed by chance."<sup>323</sup> Likewise, Jesus is a liberator who does not accept these sufferings passively as they fate, but who fights to eliminate them and restore new life of self-

---

<sup>319</sup>Pixley Jorge & Boff Clodovis. 1989. *The Bible, the Church and the Poor*. Wellwood: Burns & Oates. p115.

<sup>320</sup> Nyambura Jane Njoroge. 2002. "Reclaiming Our Heritage of Power: Discovering Our Theological Voices" in Isabel Apawo Phiri, Devarakshanam Betty Govinden and Sarojini Nadar. eds. *Her-Stories : Hidden Histories of Women of Faith in Africa*. Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications. pp 51-52.

<sup>321</sup> World Alliance of Reformed Churches 2003. p 191.

<sup>322</sup> Paulo Freire. 1996. p 33.

<sup>323</sup> Paulo Freire. 1996. p 33.

determination.<sup>324</sup> Therefore, justice and liberation are not passive issues but struggle. As a result, Jesus asks oppressed people not to accept these sufferings but to work to eradicate any form of suffering and injustice from society so that they may be free in Christ.<sup>325</sup>

#### **6.4 Conclusion**

This chapter reflected on the question of whether the Presbyterian Church has done enough to empower women to experience more abundant life. Drawing from the research findings, the chapter indicated that the Presbyterian Church has played a significant role in empowering women. At the same time, it is challenged regarding awareness of gender equality. Although the Church structures advocate gender equality, patriarchal systems are still practised in the Church's leadership. There is a need for power-sharing in the household of God, and partnership between men and women. For this reason this chapter suggested the need for renewal and transformation of the Church's mission in relation to women's empowerment. In order to achieve this, the chapter proposed that three strategies be included in the Church's vision. These include teaching about gender equality and women's full humanity; retrieving women's stories in document them for action; and empowerment of women as transformation agents. Rwandan women need to be empowered to resist evils but also they need to play part in social transformation. Inner freedom is necessary for this, freedom that allows them to feel that they are just as equally full human beings as men are. It is only then that they can move beyond poverty and oppression.

The next chapter will conclude the whole study and present the way forward for future research in this area.

---

<sup>324</sup> Susan Rakoczy. 2004. p 12.

<sup>325</sup> Susan Rakoczy. 2004. p 121.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### GENERAL CONCLUSION

#### 7.1 Introduction

This chapter aims to conclude the issues raised in this study. The intended aim of the study was to assess the role of the Rwandan Presbyterian Church in women's empowerment. It attempted to answer the research question: "In which ways has the Presbyterian Church in Rwanda responded to women's empowerment through Agaseke Project in Ruyumba parish?"

The study started with a general introduction that gives the picture of the whole study. In chapter two the study looked briefly at the historical background of the 1994 genocide that deeply affected the life of the Rwandan population in general and women in particular. It has indicated that besides losing human and material resources, Rwandan women experienced all forms of violence. Women were impoverished by the 1994 genocide tragedy and are marginalised by the patriarchal system, which usually does not allow women equal access to resources. Traditional Rwanda is characterised by a social structure that underlies the unequal social power relations between men and women. The study has observed that women are poorer than men in Rwanda as a result of gender inequality that is seen in the Church and the entire society. This is to say, a patriarchal social structure touches all aspects of women's lives: physical, spiritual, economic, educational, political and social. This was discovered by examining how the patriarchal Rwandan society regards women as inferior. Consequently there is an unequal power relation; women are discriminated against in the participation in decision-making organs.

Nevertheless Rwandan women comprise more than half of the human resources and are central to the social well-being of society. Thus, development goals cannot be fully reached without their full participation. According to Synder and Tadesse, women and development is thus a holistic concept wherein the goal of one cannot be achieved without the success of the other. Women therefore, must have "...both the legal right and access to existing means for the improvement of oneself and of society."<sup>326</sup> In this discussion, it has been highlighted that poverty reduction cannot be achieved when women are left out. Women are fully

---

<sup>326</sup> Margaret Synder and Mary, Tadesse. 1995. p 6.

humans, created in the image of God. Therefore, they deserve dignity and consideration by development planners.

In response to God's holistic mission in the world, it was identified in chapter three that the Presbyterian Church in Rwanda has engaged in women's empowerment and enables them to participate in their own development starting from their own assets. This is part of the Church mission in social transformation. Since God does not only care about the souls, but also the body of His people, to be a Christian, as de Gruchy describes, means to participate in the *mission Dei*, God's work in the world. This means we should make our communities, our society and our world a place that is closer to God's vision of *Shalom*. The Church is involved in this vision of God's mission.<sup>327</sup>

Thus, the study assessed the role of the Presbyterian Church in women's empowerment through income-generation activities. In different training workshops, women are empowered and informed about poverty reduction and job creation for sustainable livelihoods. In chapter four, the study dealt particularly with the Agaseke project in Ruyumba Presbyterian parish as a case study for women's empowerment. It indicated that women in Ruyumba parish have benefited from basket weaving. Drawing from the field research findings, chapter five has shown that the lives of women involved in the Agaseke project have changed positively since they earn income to use for their basic needs. This has liberated them from dependence which always undermines women's full humanity. In this regard women are thankful to God and to the Presbyterian Church for empowering them to use their gifts and capabilities in order to overcome poverty.

Nevertheless, women have expressed their wishes for the Church to include awareness of gender equality in its teachings so that the churchmen who still carry the patriarchal mind-set can be transformed toward gender equality. This was discussed in chapter six where the study has evaluated the work of the Presbyterian Church in relation to women's experiences of life in abundance - the mission of Jesus whom the Church is following. It was suggested that the church needs to re-visit its mission toward gender equality. The same chapter proposed some strategies by which to achieve this goal. The next section points out some

---

<sup>327</sup> Steve de Gruchy. 2005. p 28.

recommendations as a way forward for the church to improve women's economic empowerment in Ruyumba parish. These can also be useful in other parishes.

## **7.2 A way forward**

To conclude the study, I wish to recommend that further research in this area should explore how the empowerment approach should be rearticulated and embedded within the gender and development discourse not as a means, but, as a goal for gender equality. Thus, women's empowerment should be seen as a broader version of development that encompasses the reduction of feminised poverty with social change in gender relations. Women's potential, gifts and talents should be mapped in order to overcome their context of vulnerability.

### ***7.2.1 Mapping Assets***

This study has established that the lives of women who are involved in Agaseke project have changed positively, which is appreciated. However, the parish has a large number of women who are still living in conditions of extreme poverty. This study recommends the Church use the ABCD approach as it was described in chapter one, in order to empower women in the parish who are not gifted in weaving baskets, but are gifted in other areas, such as agriculture, sewing and cooking. Mapping the Ruyumba parish with its assets is the beginning of locating and making inventories of the talents, gifts and capacities of women and other individuals.

A fully mobilized parish often addresses its agenda with the question, "...what resources do we have to solve this problem ourselves?" This question causes every person who is interested in building to constantly update resource maps.<sup>328</sup> For instance Ruyumba parish has large area of land which is not used. This can be a starting point for the gardening projects and other activities that can help women in their development. Ruyumba parish has other community activities such as primary and secondary schools, Compassion International projects, shops and markets. It is important that women and the Church work together with the community. Together they can adopt strategies to ensure that natural, social, human and financial assets are well utilized for development.

---

<sup>328</sup>John Kretzmann and John Mcknight.1993. p 346.



### **7.2.2 Building relationship**

Empowerment however, is not power through numerical strength, nor is it reversal of power from men to women. It is rather a power demonstrated in community solidarity, no matter how large or small the community may be. Therefore, in order to advance the work of women in Ruyumba parish, it requires partnership networks with the community itself and other development actors. Ranjini argues that "...the solidarity in group work builds courage, breaks isolation and begins to reveal collective power".<sup>329</sup> One of the important issues that the Parish should never overlook is working hand in hand with the government. The government has a duty to assist the people with community development, including those of Ruyumba, in terms of loans and support. For instance, the Ministry of Gender has introduced a rural development fund. It was opened and financed in each district to facilitate the granting of small loans to rural women for their self-promotion.<sup>330</sup> If there was no collaboration between the parish and the government, then the local people would lose out and this would include the women of the Ruyumba Presbyterian Church. Therefore, it is important for the Church to play an advocacy role on micro and macro development levels.

### **7.3 Conclusion**

In drawing the study to a conclusion, it is argued that women's empowerment is a long process. It requires partnership between women and men. It requires all the people who are interested in developing women's skills, capacities, and abilities to be willing to enhance and facilitate the potential of women in all spheres of livelihoods. The major focus should be based on freedom, an element that brings about inner peace of the women in the society and the community. There is a need to develop women's sense of self-esteem so that they can be part of their liberation journey. The Church should be in solidarity with women and oppressed people in order to denounce injustice and oppression of God's people. The Church should recognise that both men and women are created in God's image and are called together to participate in the project of building up the Kingdom of God on earth.

---

<sup>329</sup> Rebera Ranjini. 1990. p 41.

<sup>330</sup> MIGEPROFE. 2003. p 55.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

### A. Published Books and Articles

Abuom, Agnes. 2001. "Women's issues in Health and Education" in D. Belshaw, R. Calderisi and C. Sugden, eds. *Faith in development: Partnership between the World Bank and the Churches of Africa*. Oxford:Regnum. pp. 111-130.

Ackermann, D. 1991. "Being Woman, Being Human" (93-105) in Ackermann, D. and draper, J.A. and Masinini, E. eds. *Women Hold Up Half the Sky: Women in the Church in Southern Africa*. Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications. pp. 83-105.

Association des Veuves du Genocide/AGAHOZO.1999. *Etude sur les violences faites aux femmes au Rwanda*. Kigali : AVEGA.

Birdsall, Nancy and Sabot Richard, eds. 1991. *Unfair Advantage: Labor Market Discrimination in Developing Countries*. World Bank. Washington, D.C

Boanino, Miguez Jose. 1983. *Toward a Christian Political Ethics*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press.

Boff, Leonardo and Boff Clodovis. 1987. *Introducing Liberation Theology*. Wellwood: Burns & Oates.

Bogaards, Jaap. 1996. "Challenges for Tear Fund Holland in the Twenty-First Century" in *Transformation An international Evangelical Dialogue on Mission and Ethics*, 13 (4) (October/December). pp. 21-39.

Bowen, Roger 1996. Rwanda-Missionary reflections on a catastrophe. *Anvil* 13 (1) pp. 33-44.

Brandel, Syrier, M. 1962. *Black Women in Search of God*. London: Lutherworth.

Buckley, M. I. 1984. "Women, Poverty, and economic justice" (3-10) in Kalven, J. and Buckley, M. I. (eds) *Women's Spirit Bonding*. New York: Pilgrim press. pp. 14-35.

Clifford, Anne M. 2005. *Introducing Feminist Theology*. Maryknoll: Orbis. pp. 133-176.

Daly, Mary. 1973. *Beyond God the Father*. Boston, Mass: Beacom Press.

de Gruchy, S. 2005. 'Integrating Mission and development'. In *International Congregational Journal*, 5, 27-36.

de Gruchy, Steve. 2003. "Of Agency, Assets and Appreciation: Seeking Some Commonalities Between Theology and Development", *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa*, 117, 20-39.

Des Forges, Alison. 1999. *Leave none to tell the story: Genocide in Rwanda*. New York: Human Right Watch.

Destexhe, Alain. 1995. *Rwanda and genocide in the twentieth century*, London: Pluto Press.

Diakonia Council of Churches. 2006. *The Oikos Journey: A Theological on the Economic Crisis in South Africa*. Durban: Diakonia Council of Churches.

Ellis, F. 2000. *Rural livelihoods and diversity in developing countries*. Oxford: IDS

Folk, J. 1991. *Doing theology, doing justice*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press.

Freire, Paulo. 1996. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. London: Penguin Books.

Gatwa, Tharcisse. 1995. Revivalism and ethnicity: the church in Rwanda. *Transformation* 12 (2), 4-8.

Gennrich, Daniela. 2004. *The Church in an HIV+ World. A Practical Handbook*. Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications.

Gonzalez, Michelle A. 2007. *Created in God's Image: An Introduction to Feminist Theological Anthropology*. Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books.

Gopal, Gita and Sakim Myriam. eds. 1998. *Gender and Law: Eastern Africa Speaks*. Proceedings of a World Bank, Economic Commission for Africa Conference. Washington D.C. World Bank.

Graaff, Johann, ed. 2001. *Poverty and Development: Introduction to Sociology*, Cape Town: Oxford Press.

Haddad, B. G. 2003. Gender, development and faith: the church and women's struggle to survive. *Missionalia* 31 (3), 427-450.

Haddad, Beverley 2004. "The Manyano movement in South Africa: Site of struggle survival and resistance". *In Agenda*, 61, 4-13.

Haleh, A and Barrientos, S. eds. 1999. *Women, Globalisation and Fragmentation in the development World*, London: MacMillan Press Ltd.

Hallman, G. David. 2000. *Spiritual values for earth community*. Geneva: WCC

Hammond, Peter. 1996. *Holocaust in Rwanda: The role of Gun Control, Media Manipulation, Liberal Church Leaders and the United Nations*. Cape Town: Frontline Fellowship.

Hinga, Teresia M. 1992. "Jesus Christ and Liberation of Women in African" in Odoyoye M.A. and Kanyoro M.R., eds. *The Will to Arise: women tradition and the church in Africa*. Maryknoll: Orbis. pp. 183-194.

Johnstone, Patrick 1993. *Operation World*. Carlisle, UK:OM Publishing.

Kabango, John Wesley. 2002. "case study Church-based Rural Development: RDIS, Rwanda" in Tim Chester, *Justice, Mercy and Humility Integral Mission and the Poor*. Carlisle: Paternoster Press. pp. 11-29.

Kanyoro, R. Musimbi. 2002. *Introducing Feminist Cultural Hermeneutics: An African Perspective*. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press.

Kanyoro, R. Musimbi. 2001. "Engendered Communal Theology: African Women's Contribution to the Theology in 21st Century" in Nyambura J Njoroge and Musa W Dube, eds. *Talitha Cum! Theologies of African Women*. Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications. pp. 158-180.

Korten, David. 1990. *Getting to the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: voluntary action and the global agenda*, Connecticut: Kumarian Press.

Kretzman John and McKnight John. 1993. *Building a community from inside out: A path toward finding and mobilizing a community's asset*. Chicago: ACTA Publications.

Kubai Anne Nkirote. 2008. "Living in the Shadow of Genocide : Women and HIV/AIDS in Rwanda" in Hinga, Teresia M., Anne Nkirote Kubai, Philomena Njeri Mwaura and Hazel Ayanga, eds. 2008 *Women, religion and HIV/AIDS in Africa : Responding to ethical and theological challenges*. Pietermaritzburg: Cluster. pp. 49-74.

Kumalo, R. Simangaliso 2003. *From Deserts to Forests*. Pretoria: CB Power Bible Centre.

Kumalo, R Simangaliso. 2007. The place, the parish and the power: Church-State relations in Rwanda and the genocide. In *Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae*. XXXIII, No/Nr 2, 211-233.

Linden, Ian 1977. *Church and Revolution in Rwanda*. New York: Africana Publishing Company.

Malinga, P. 2002. "Women in Church leadership: Co-option or transformation" in *Women in God's image, PACSA*" Pietermaritzburg. Vol 8. pp. 3-5.

Mamdani, M, 2001. *When victims become killers: Colonialism, Nativism, and Genocide in Rwanda*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press.

Martin, John. 1995. Rwanda: Why? *Transformation* 12/2: 1-3.

Mayout, Linda. 1986. *All are not equal: African women in Cooperatives*. London.

Mbuy, Tatah H. 1995. The Rwanda nightmare: a source of great pain for the Synod fathers. *In African Ecclesial Review* 37/1: 49-59.

McCullum, M. 1994. *The Angels have left us: The Rwandan Tragedy and the Church*. Geneva: WCC.

Migliore, DL. 1991. *Faith Seeking Understanding: An Introduction to Christian theology*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: WB Eerdmans Publishing Company.

Ministry of Gender and women's empowerment. 2003. *National Policy* Kigali: MIGEPROFE

Mombo, Esther. 2002. "Harahamisi and Jumaa: The Development of the Women's Meetings in East Africa Yearly Meeting of Friends (Quakers) in Isabel Apawo Phiri, Devakarsham Betty Govinden & Sarojini Nadar, eds. *Her-stories: Hidden Histories of Women of faith in Africa*. Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications. pp. 59-83.

Momsen, J.H. 2004. *Gender and Development*. London: Routledge.

Moyo, Fulata. 2005. "Sex, Gender, Power and HIV/AIDS in Malawi: Threats and challenges to women being Church". in Isabel Apawo Phiri and Sarojini Nadar, eds. *On Being Church: African women's voices and visions*. Geneva: WCC publications. pp. 127-143.

Musemakweli, Elisee and Willems, William .2007. *Eglise Presbytérienne au Rwanda sa mission et son témoignage 1907 à 2007: Centième Anniversaire*. Bruxelles, Imprimerie N.DE JONGE.

Myers, Bryant. 1999, *Walking with the Poor, Principles and Practices of Transformational Development* New York: Orbis Books.

Narayan, Deepa. 2001. "Voices of the Poor" in D.Belshaw, R. Calderisi and C. Sugden, eds. *Faith in Development: Partnership Between the World Bank and the Churches of Africa*. Oxford:Regnum. pp. 39-48.

Njoroge, Nyambura J. 1996. "Groaning and languishing in Labour Pains" in Kanyoro, M.R. and Njoroge N., eds. *Groaning in Faith: African Women in the Household of God*. Nairobi: Action publishers. pp. 3-15.

Njoroge, Nyambura J. 2002. "Reclaiming Our Heritage of Power: Discovering Our Theological Voices" in Isabel Apawo Phiri, Dervarakshanam Betty Govinden and Sarojini Nadar, eds. *Her-Stories: Hidden Histories of Women of Faith in Africa*. Pietermaritzburg: cluster Publications. pp. 39-57.

Oduyoye, Mercy A. 2001. *Introducing African women's theology*. Sheffield: Academic Press.

Oduyoye ,Mercy.A. 2001. "Transforming Power: Paradigms from the Novels of Buchi Emecheta in Nyambura J. Njoroge and Musa W Dube, eds. *Talitha Cum! Theologies of African Women*: Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publication. pp. 222-244.

Oduyoye, Mercy A. 1995. *Daughters of Anowa: African women and Patriarchy*. Maryknoll: New York.

Ogundipe-Leslie, M. 1994. *Recreating ourselves: African Women and Critical Transformation*. Trenmton, JN: Africa World Press.

Osmani, Khan N. Lutfun. 1998. "The Grameen Bank Experiment: Empowerment of Women through Credit" in Afshar, Haleh, ed. *Women and Empowerment Illustrations from the Third World*. London: MACMILLAN PRESS LTD. pp. 55-78.

Payne, Sarah. 1991. *Women, health and poverty: An introduction*, Harvester British

Phiri, Apawo Isabel 2000. "Domestic Violence in Christian Homes: A Durban Case Study" in *Journal of Constructive Theology*. Vol. 6, (2), pp. 85-110.

Phiri, Apawo Isabel. 2003. "African Women of Faith Speak Out in an HIV/AIDS Era" in , Phiri, Apawo Isabel, Beverley Haddad and Madipoane Masenya, eds. *African women, HIV/AIDS and faith communities*. Pietermaritzburg : Cluster. pp. 3-20.

- Phiri, Apawo Isabel. 1975. "Doing Theology as African Women" in Parratt John. ed. *A Reader in African Christian Theology*. London: S.P.C.K. pp. 45-56.
- Rakoczy, S. 2004. *In Her Name: Women Doing Theology*. Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications.
- Ranjini, Rebera. ed. 1990. *We Cannot Dream Alone: A story of women in development*. Geneva: WCC publications.
- Reddock, Rhoda. 2000, "Why Gender? Why Development? In Parpart, JL, Cornelly MP and Barriteach VE. *Theoretical Perspectives on Gender and Development*, Ottawa: IDRC. pp. 24-50.
- Repubulika y'u Rwanda. 1999. *Ubumwe bw'abanyarwanda, Kigali. Export Guide*. Kigali: RIEPA
- Robinson, M. 1995. "Towards a New Paradigm of Community Development." *Community Development Journal*, 30:1, pp. 21-30.
- Rowlands, Jo 1998. 'A Word of the Times, but What Does it mean? Empowerment in the Discourse and Practice of Development'. in Afshar, Haleh, ed. *Women and Empowerment Illustrations from the Third World*. London: MACMILLAN PRESS LTD. pp. 85-102.
- Rutaganda, Désire. 2007. *Collaboration entre Chrétiens et Musulmans dans la lutte contre la pauvreté au Rwanda*, Kigali: CFD.
- Rutayisire, Antoine. 1995. *Faith under Fire: Testimonies of Christian Bravery*. Buckhurst Hill: African Evangelism Enterprise.
- Schaeffer, Francis and U. Middlemann. 1992. *Pollution and the Death of Man*, Wheaton, Illinois, Crossway Books.
- Shyaka, M. 2004. *Le Conflit Rwandais: Origine, Développement et Stratégies de Sorti*. Kigali: NURC.



Snyder, Margaret and Tadesse, Mary. 1995. *African Women and Development: A History*. London: Zed Books.

Stewart, W. David and Kamins A. Michael. 1993. *Secondary Research, Information Sources and methods* (second Edition). London: SAGE Publication.

Stewart, D.W. and Shamdasani, P. N. 1990. *Focus Groups: Theory and Practice*. USA: SAGE Publications

Taylor, C. 1999. *Sacrifice as Terror: The Rwanda genocide of 1994*. Oxford: New York: BERG.

Twagiramariya and Turshen, eds. 1998. "Favours to Give and Consenting Victims." *What Women Do in Wartime: Gender and Conflict in Africa*. London: Zed Books. pp. 35-46.

Urvin, Peter. 1998. *Aiding Violence*. Connecticut: Kumarian Press.

World Alliance of Reformed Churches Researches. 2003. *Created in God's Image: From Hierarchy to Partnership*, Switzerland: WARC.

World Council of Churches. 2004. "Overcoming violence against women and children" *Echoes: Justice, Peace and creation News*. Geneva: WCC Publication.

Zuckerman, Elaine. 1998. *Integrated WID/Gender issues into Social Investment Funds*. Inter-American Development Bank. Washington, DC.

## **B. Dissertations**

Haddad, B.G. 2000. *African Women's Theology of Survival: Intersecting Faith, Feminism and Development*. Unpublished PhD Thesis: University of Natal.

Kumalo, R. Simangaliso. 2005. "Theology of Education: The role of the Church in education for social transformation: A Methodist contribution". PHD Thesis. University of KwaZulu Natal. Pietermaritzburg Campus.

Muriithi, Sicily Mbura. 2009. Vulnerability and capability in Kenya: Towards an African women's public theology, PhD Thesis. University of KwaZulu-Natal, School of Religion and Theology.

Rutayisire Theoneste. 2005. Christian response to human need: a case study of ministry by Christian NGOs to genocide widows in Kigali-Ville Province-Rwanda, Masters Thesis. Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal, School of Religion and Theology.

Surwumwe, Salomon Emmanuel. 2007. A contextual theological approach to New Testament interpretation: The relevance of 2 Corinthians 5:18-21 to reconciliation in Post-genocide Rwanda through church mediation. M.A. thesis, Pietermaritzburg: University of KwaZulu-Natal, School of Religion and Theology.

## **B. Other References**

African Rights Working for Justice, April 2004

Agaseke Project Annual Report 2007. Kigali: EPR

CFD 2006. Women and poverty reduction programme: Kicukiro

Class discussion with Steve de Gruchy on 12 August 2008. Pietermaritzburg: KwaZulu-Natal University, School of Religion and Theology.

Georginas. Treasure Evans, Trip report for Rwanda July 2003.

Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning Report 2003. Kigali.

Ministry of Gender and Family Promotion 2003 Annual Report. Kigali: MIGEPROFE.

Mondini, F. 2008. Politics Beyond the State. Unpublished paper. Pietermaritzburg.

Newbury and Baldwin Hannal. 2000. Aftermath: Women in postgenocide Rwanda working paper no 303

Nkubana, Jeanette. 2008. Increasing Women's access to international markets. Unpublished Paper.

The minute of the 42<sup>nd</sup> General synod minute. 1997. Kigali: EPR

The minutes of Abatwaramucyo, March 1967. Kigali: EPR

UN Commission on Human Rights, Reports on the situation of Human Rights in Rwanda submitted by Mr René Degni-Séqui, Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights, under paragraph 20 of Resolution S-3/1 of May 1994, E/CN.4/1996/68, 29 January 1996 para 16.

United Nations. 1948. Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide Adopted by Resolution 260 (III) A of the U.N. General Assembly on 9 December 1948.; Entry into force: 12 January 195 ([http://www.preventgenocide.org /law/convention/text.htm](http://www.preventgenocide.org/law/convention/text.htm) accessed on May 20, 2008).

United Nations. 1996. *The Beijing Declaration and The Platform for Action: Fourth World Conference on Women Beijing, China 4-15 September 1995*. New York : Department off Public Information.

United Nations. 2006. Information and outreach programme, “The Rwanda Genocide and the United Nations”: Report of the Secretary-General, General Assembly, Sixtieth session, Agenda item 73 (a), A/60/863.

Zuckerman, Elaine. 2001. Why Engendering PRSPs Reduces Poverty and the case of Rwanda. World Institute for Development Economics Research Discussion paper No 2001/112.

#### **D. Internet sources**

Macy's website: <http://www.macys.com/campaign/rwanda/index.jsp>: Accessed on 5<sup>th</sup> October 2009

Youssef, Jennifer.2008. "Institute to train Rwandan Women." March, Detroit News. Available online: <http://www.detnews.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID>: accessed on 16<sup>th</sup> October 2009.

<http://rwandagateway.org> : accessed on 5<sup>th</sup> November 2009

<http://www.acraconfession.org> accessed on 18<sup>th</sup> October 2009

[http://www.aidscompetence.org/content/projects/6\\_cnls\\_rwanda.htm](http://www.aidscompetence.org/content/projects/6_cnls_rwanda.htm) accessed on 20<sup>th</sup> August 2009.

<http://allafrica.com/stories/2000905181264.html> : accessed on 19<sup>th</sup> September 2009

<http://www.scribd.com/doc/6450386/Storytelling-as-a-Key-Methodology>: accessed on 9<sup>th</sup> February 2010

#### **E. In-depth interviews and Focus Group discussions**

- **People involved in-depth interviewed on 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2009**
  - The Pastor of Ruyumba Presbyterian Church Parish
  - The Chairperson of Women's Programme in the Presbyterian Church
  - The Chairperson of Agaseke Project in Ruyumba Parish

- **People involved in the Focus group discussions**

##### **Group 1: Single women interviewed on 3<sup>rd</sup> November 2009**

- Kagaju Marie
- Kagoyire Agnes

- Kamariza Jeane
- Mukamana Beathe
- Mukantamati Flavia

**Group 2: Married women Focus Group discussions on 3<sup>rd</sup> November 2009**

- Kanzayire Mediatrice
- Mukashema Joyce
- Murekatete Jackline
- Mutuyimana Vestine
- Nyiranshuti Odette

**Group 3: Prisoners' wives Focus Group discussions on 5<sup>th</sup> November 2009**

- Iradukunda Susan
- Kamanzi Monique
- Mukabarisa Chantal
- Mukasine Marthe
- Masengesho Clarisse

## APPENDIX 1

### Guiding questions for Focus Groups

1. How has the Agaseke Project helped you economically?  
*Ni gute umushinga wo kuboha Agaseke wagufashije mu kwiteza imbere mu bukungu?*
2. How does it help other women to improve their livelihoods?  
*Ni gute ufasha abandi bagore kugira imibereho myiza?*
3. What is your understanding of why the church should be involved in women's empowerment?  
*Wowe wumva ko ari ngombwa ko Itorero rigira gahunda yo gufasha abagore kwiteza imbere?*
4. To what extent does Agaseke Project provide a space of expressing and sharing your poverty experiences after 1994 genocide?  
*Ni mu buhe buryo kuboha Agaseke bigufasha byagufashije kwisanzura mu kuvuga ubukene bwawe aho jenocide irangiriye?*
5. How has this helped you to address the challenges you faced as a result of the genocide?  
*Ni gute byagufashije guhangana n'ingaruka za Jenocide?*
6. Is the Presbyterian Church doing enough to empower you to experience life abundantly?  
*Mbese Itorero presbyterian rikora ibikwiriye ngo ribafashe kubona ubugingo ndetse bwinshi?*
7. If not, what do you expect the church to do in addition to what it is already doing in the Agaseke project?  
*Niba ataribyho ni iki mwifuzako ryakongerako kubyo ryakoragako?*

## APPENDIX 2

### A Guiding questions for individual Interviews

#### a. The Chairperson of Agaseke Project

1. What do you understand to be the role the Presbyterian Church in empowering women?  
*Wumva ute uruhare rw" Itorero Presbyterian mu gushyigikira abagore?*
2. How does the church help women in your association to improve their livelihoods?  
*Ni gute Itorero rigasha uyu mushinga wanyu kugirango mwiteze imbere?*
3. Is the Presbyterian Church doing enough to empower women to experience life abundantly?  
*Mbese Itorero presbyterian rikora ibikwiriye ngo ribafashe kubona ubugingo ndetse bwinshi?*
4. If not what else do you think can be done?  
*Niba ataribyo ni iki mwifuza ryakongera kubyo ryakoraga?*

#### b. The Pastor of Ruyumba Parish

1. What do you understand by the role of the church in women's empowerment?  
*Wumva ute uruhare rw" Itorero Presbyterian mu gushyigikira abagore?*
2. How do male attitudes toward women in church affect women's effort for development particularly those who are involved in the Agaseke Project?  
*Mbese imyumvire y'abagabo mw' Itorero igire izihe ngaruka mu gutera imbere kw' abagore cyane aba bakora umushinga w' Agaseke?*
3. Is the Presbyterian Church doing enough to empower women to experience life abundantly?  
*Mbese Itorero presbyterian rikora ibikwiriye ngo ribafashe kubona ubugingo ndetse bwinshi?*
4. If not what else do you think can be done?  
*Niba ataribyo ni iki mwifuza ryakongera kubyo ryakoraga?*

#### c. The Chairperson of women's programme in the Presbyterian Church

1. What do you understand by the role of the Presbyterian Church in women's empowerment?  
*Wumva ute uruhare rw" Itorero Presbyterian mu gushyigikira abagore?*
2. Why is the church involved in women's empowerment?  
*Mbese kuki Itorero rigomba gushyigikira abagore?*
3. What are the similarities and the differences between women who are involved in projects focusing on income generation, and those who are not?

*Mbese ni irihe tandukaniro cy'abagore bagira imishinga yo kwiteza imbere n'abandi batabikora?*

4. Is the Presbyterian Church doing enough to empower women to experience life abundantly?

*Mbese Itorero presbyterian rikora ibikwiriye ngo ribafashe kubona ubugingo ndetse bwinshi?*

5. If not what is the Church's plan to achieve this mission?

*Niba ataribyo ni iki mwifuzwa ryakongerera kubyo ryakoraga?*