Collective steps towards enhancing rural livelihoods in post-genocide Rwanda

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Declaration

I declare that this thesis, which I have submitted, is all my own work and that any information copied in part or in full have been fully identified and properly acknowledged in references. This thesis has not been submitted to any other university, other than UMB for any type of academic degree.

Signature author………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………….
Dedication

I dedicate my thesis with love and gratitude to my family: Jo, Peter, Steinar and Florence and thank them for their enormous support and for their ability to share their wisdom.
Acknowledgment

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to the people of Rwabutenge, especially the members from the ishyirahamwe and all the people that are connected with the Foundation for their participation and interest in my field work. I very much like to express my appreciation for the support I received from my family in Rwanda. Additionally my thesis benefited enormously from the support and input from my two wonderful supervisors professor Kjersti Larsen and professor José Kagabo.

*Komera Rwanda nziza* (have courage lovely Rwanda)
Abstract

After 1994 genocide the government of Rwanda has adopted gender policies and legislations aimed encouraging and supporting women to participate in decision-making and income earning. The aim of my research was to assess if the Rwandan government’s gender policy and legislations, and the participation in ishyirahamwe (associations) increased women’s empowerment and improved women’s livelihoods both economically and socially. And further if the change in women’s status led to reduce gender asymmetry.

My research was on 7ishyirahamwe (associations), connected to the Foundation development initiative in Rwabutenge in rural Rwanda. The ishyirahamwe were income generating working units, comprising of men, and women, but the majority was women.

I applied qualitative research strategy and undertook participatory observation. To be able to investigate relevant aspects of ishyirahamwe members’ livelihoods and survival strategies, I applied the livelihoods framework. I adopted the assets-access-activities approach to identify the status and sustainability of the activities undertaken by the ishyirahamwe.

I identified land ownership as a key factor to be able to accumulate resources and diversify. According to my findings the resource poor ishyirahamwe that did not own land experienced the ishyirahamwe as a safety net for times of crisis. Meanwhile for the resourceful groups with access to land the ishyirahamwe contributed to assets ownership and livelihoods security.

My findings suggest that the GoR’s legal and institutional reforms have substantially improved women’s right on paper, but has a long way to go before the reforms are translated into practice among the rural poor people.
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1 Introduction

1.1 Participation of women in the public sphere

In the immediate aftermath of the genocide in Rwanda, 70 percent of the population was female, because the majority of men were either killed, in prison or in exile. The impact of the genocide on gender roles was that women became head of household and sole breadwinners (African, 2004). Earlier in Rwandan society women’s participation in public life had been culturally and socially constrained, but due to the consequences of the genocide women were faced with new roles and responsibilities. Women became the main actors in the reconstruction and reconciliation process of the country (African Rights, 2004).

In post genocide Rwanda, the Rwandan government (GoR) has adopted a strong gender profile in the new constitution of 2003, that emphasised and encouraged women’s involvement in decision-making and development at all levels of society (McNairn, 2004).

I will argue however, that the rural vulnerable people, predominately women, do not perceive themselves as included in the formal reconstruction of Rwanda.

In recent years a number of legal and constitutional reforms have substantially improved women’s rights on paper (African Rights, 2004). On the political arena the 30 per cent quotas for women in political institution was enforced (POWER, 2005). On the legal area the family law that allows women basic rights in relations to inheritance, property ownership and divorce was introduced (African Rights, 2004). Unfortunately, according to what I was told by rural women during my field work the reforms in the family law had still not reached the government’s intended goal of gender equity. The reasons can be attributed to the fact that the

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1 Focus group interview of ishyirahamwe members in the cellule of Runzenze, 02.12.2005
reforms do not seem to address the problems of rural men and women and the lack of resources to enhance the political lower level structures.

The implementation of the gender policy on grass root level is in the hands of the local committees. The local committees’ tasks are among other things to change social attitudes among the rural population and facilitate gender training. The committees comprises predominately of women that work solely on voluntary basis and without payments. The procedure is that the donors give money to the upper levels such as NGOs and the government that in turn distributes the resources downwards. In the process of resource distribution the committees are not a priority area which implies that the committee members do not get adequate payments and resources to fulfil their duties. The main problem is that the lawmakers have not facilitated adequate structures in place to make legal reforms operational at grassroots level (African Rights, 2004).

My experience is that there exists a gap between ideology and practice and between urban and rural experience of inclusion and participation in the reconstruction of the country. According to the rural poor people themselves the GoR’s poverty reduction initiatives and reforms, do not successfully reflect their needs and priorities and has therefore a long way ahead until the intended goals of the whole population, especially women involvement, in decision-making are reached. The people of Rwabutenge claimed that if they would have had decision-making capacity, their livelihood situation in regards to access to secure drinking water, access to adequate health services and access to labour, would have been enhanced.

In addition, 90 per cent of the population are located in rural areas and are by occupation engaged in agriculture, mainly for subsistence. Further approximately 70, 2 per cent of the population can read and write. There are more men (76, 2 percent) than women (64, 3 per cent) that have literacy skills (The World Fact book Rwanda, 2005). A large number of the population is illiterate which makes it a constraint for them to participate in shaping and affecting the formal policies and laws that addresses their livelihoods (Ellis, 2000). In addition the rural areas are geographically distanced from the city which contributes to that the rural people are not a priority when decisions are being made and planned in city centre of Kigali (Ellis, 2000).
During my research I recognised a strong political will to reduce gender disparities, but that the implementation of gender policies has been a great challenge for the population. The traditional Rwandan gender roles assigned women to the domestic domain and men to the public domain. These norms and stereotypes take time to alter and the reality is that although girls and women’s rights are recognized in the constitution, the majority of rural women’s experience do not relate to these laws.

1.2 The government’s effort to reduce poverty and enhance gender equality

There are several types of discourses within in development work that construct the concept of poverty. The same discourses do not only affect the way that policy makers implement projects, but also how they perceive their role in the development process. In the contemporary discourse on poverty reduction is considered as social justice, meaning that the poor has claims on the GoR to help them overcome their poverty and other poverty related problems. The role of the state is to be accountable and responsible to the citizens of the country.

The national policies in post genocide Rwanda have incorporated a strong gender profile due to the effects of the genocide, encouraging women to participate in all realms of society to combat poverty and discrimination and promote peace building.

As a result to the gender approach here is a strong representation of women in many decision-making bodies in Rwanda and the proportion of women in Parliament, 49 % (African Rights, 2004).Which is very high seen from a global perspective. These powerful women are role models for the Rwandan women, but to what degree do urban female parliamentarians represent and remain in touch with rural women’s priorities?

1.3 The women’s organizations

Until 1985 gender policy did not exist at the level of national politics and no women participated in political life in Rwanda (African Rights, 2004). In Rwanda women were not allowed to work in organisations, unless they got their husband approval. Many women were

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2 Lecture by St.Clair.Asuncion (8.3.2006) in the Poverty and Development Seminars Lecture Series, Centre for Development and Environment (SUM), Oslo 08.03. 2006.
therefore blocked from taking part in income generating activities and from gaining resources in general. This fact justified that women could not have access to a bank account and they were additionally effectively excluded from inheritance by a patrilineal inheritance pattern (African Rights, 2004).

Patrilineal practice only allows inheritance of land, livestock and other resources through the male line (Eriksen, 2001). The consequences are that girls and women are excluded from owning and controlling resources and they are thus dependent on men. According to my findings, the only way Rwandese women could gain future security and limited access to resources was through marriage.

The Rwandese women’s awareness of gender inequalities was raised at the third Global Conference of Women that took place in Nairobi in 1985 (African Rights, 2004). The result was the creation of the first NGO women’s organization, *Haguruka* (Reseau des Femmes). The organization arranged training programs aimed at rural women concerns. Soon other women’s groups emerged from Reseau des Femmes redressing women’s social, cultural, legal and educational marginalization.

In 1988 the ruling political party, the National Revolutionary Movement for Development (MRND) realised that it could no longer ignore gender issues and facilitated a collective, Union of Rwandese women for Development (URMA). URMA pressured for women’s right to participate in co-operatives and pursue income generating work. Participation by women was to a limited extend and by 1992 forces from RDF recommended the creation of a Ministry of the Family and the Promotion of Women. The ministry had offices at the commune and prefecture level, thus ensuring some kind of mandate ((African Rights, 2004).

In 1995 The Ministry of Gender and Promotion of Women (MIGEPROFE) was established and has been the key institution advocating for women’s rights and mainstreaming gender in policymaking within the government. The ministry has established the women’s councils at each level in each administrative unit. Rwanda is divided into four administrative units: the highest level is the Provincial, then District, Sector and the lowest the cell level, hence closest to the people. The government structure is reserved for women only (MINALOC, 2006).
The women’s council comprise of ten women who are directly elected at cell level and then by indirect successive election at the other levels. Only women have the right to vote for candidates to represent them in these structures. The women’s council’s tasks are to advocate and promote gender issues to local authorities and the population. The councils are linked to the ordinary administrative structure through representatives in the local General Council. According to the Stensrud and Husby (2005) the women’s councils seem to have increased women’s participation in politics.

1.4 The civil society

The gender profile is also reflected in civil society by numerous of women’s organisations working for reconciliation and reconstruction. The organisations undertake a wide range of tasks to reach their goals. Some organisation work with the provision of basic needs services and providing shelter and repairing houses. Others work with micro credit and the provision of legal assistance. While others are specializes in supporting income generating activities and promoting women’s rights (Stensrud and Husby, 2005).

In Rwanda there is only one network that organizes women’s associations: the Women’s Network Pro –Femmes/ Twese Hamwe which has about 40 member organizations in the network. The network was created in 1992 and has an advocacy role and has contributed in reconstruction and reconciliation through combating gender discrimination and empowering women (Stensrud and Husby, 2005).

In 1995 they managed to initiate the Campaign for Peace programme. Pro-Femmes have a strong legitimacy and have used their influence to support the women’s organisations to face authorities with sensitive issues. In addition Pro-femmes also have the role in locating funding among its member organisations. This is because the international donors exclusively prefer to work with a big and connected network like Pro-Femmes (Stensrud and Husby, 2005).

The network has established strong links to the Government and this has raised critical voices among NGOs, other civil society actors and the international community. The close
connections between the network and the government have raised questions like: to what extent, do the government influence the networks agenda and how does this affect the networks autonomy and ability to represent the poor? According to the critics the civil society in Rwanda is marginal and can be characterized as controlled by the Government (Renard and Molenares, 2003).

The tendency is that there seem to be a strong link between the GoR and civil society and a weak link between civil society and the grass roots. The role of the civil society is to represent grass root interests and this can only be possible if civil society can acquire autonomy vis-à-vis the state. Pro- Femmes has been doing a remarkable effort to combat poverty and other socio economic problems, but like other organisations they lack attachment to the grass roots (Stensrud and Husby, 2005).

One of the consequences of living in a society that has a gap between elite and the rest of the population is that the elites remain being the only ones that enjoy access to decision-making and resources. The main purpose of my research was to look at the GoR’s political efforts to bridge to the gap between the elite and the people, and between women and men through policies and legislations that are aimed at empowering marginalized rural people, predominantly women. I further wanted to explore if these political efforts were incorporated in grassroots’ practices.

1.5 My research

My research was carried out in Rwabutenge which is a rural and 95 percent of the Rwandan population resides in rural areas. The rural areas are the most populated and poorest areas. Surveys reveal that the most vulnerable and poor belong to women headed households (Stensrud and Husby, 2005) and in 2004 approximately 32 per cent of Rwandan households were headed by women (POWER, 2005).

My objective was to examine if the change that had appeared in the gender roles in the post genocide context, had contributed to further change in gender relations. Gender roles are social constructed and historical produced and can therefore be renegotiated in times of hardship (Cupples, cited in Sweetman, 2005). Rwandan women’s roles changed in the aftermath of the 1994 genocide; women became breadwinners and head of household.
Women had to undertake work previously undertaken and limited to men such as providing food for the household and taking care of livestock. My findings support that although gender roles had been altered the relations between men and women remained according to the customary practices.

Although my research was on the relationship between men and women, my main focus was on women, because this approach also gave me access to men. Men are connected to women in various ways through kinship as fathers, brothers and sons and by marriage as husbands. My aim was to explore what it t to be a women and what it means to be a man in contemporary rural Rwanda and by doing this I was be able to include both experiences in my study.

Further I assessed the implementation of the GoR’s gender reforms and policy from the ideological level and what impact these reforms had on grass root level practices. One of my findings were that the change in gender roles that had taken place when women got the opportunity to participate in ishyirahamwe did not necessarily contribute to substantial changes in gender relations. But I did however experience a potential for change in gender relations in regards to women’s access to and ownership of resources through the Foundations development program, which I will discuss below.

The Youth Citizenship and Solidarity Foundation (Foundation) started the project in Rwabutenge aiming at vulnerable people, predominately women. The Foundation is a French NGO that has about 11 ishyirahamwe (associations) in the portfolio, but I limited my research to 7 due to two factors: The first factor was time constraint and the second factor was that some of the ishyirahamwe had not started up and were not organised as a working unit.

My target group was within the 7 ishyirahamwe and they were the ones that I additionally undertook home visits too. Keeping in mind that the members devoted 33 per cent of their working week in ishyriahamwe activities one realises how important membership meant to them. My research focused on marginalized men and women’s participation ishyirahamwe and their collective achievements. The ishyirahamwe membership provided marginalized people with opportunities to pursue income generating activities and resources. The members acquired access to skills, bank accounts, and livelihood security that they did not earlier have access to. I wanted to look closer into the phenomenon ishyirahamwe and the real
implications it had on rural livelihoods, not only limited to the economical factors, but also including the social aspects.

My findings show that the economical gains functioned as incentive for the members. I looked closely at the *ishyirahamwe* as an economical unit, focusing on the activities undertaken by the members and the collective asset ownership. I did an attempt to use the information that I gathered from the economical aspect to reflect over the vital issue of sustainability. On the basis of this information I would claim that the *ishyirahamwe* functioned as a vehicle to give poor people livelihood security, rather than alleviating poverty.

Additionally I assessed the formal structure of decision making procedures, possible sources of conflict among the members, perceived constraints, laws and regulations that governed the *ishyirahamwe*. Regarding the social part I examined the reality behind the ideological concepts of poverty reduction and well being, gender equity, reconciliation and reconstruction.

With regards to gender 5 out of 7 *ishyirahamwe* had the majority of women. The women were mainly involved in agriculture, livestock raring and the production of traditional handmade crafts. The two *ishyirahamwe Korandebe* and *Duteraninkunga* were the two oldest groups and they had started up in 1996 and 1997. The two groups were also the first to contact the Foundation when the program started up between 2002 and 2004. The women started up with two empty hands and today they had managed to fulfil the dream of buying a collective plot.

The two *ishyirahamwe* that had majority of men were undertaking what I would refer to as culturally men domain activities. The *ishyirahamwe Kagarwa* was involved in the cultivation of the cash crop coffee and all the members additionally owned their private coffee plots. The *ishyirahamwe Giramata* was preoccupied with cow breeding and all the members had private cattle. Both coffee and cows are highly valuable resources. *Dukunde Abamugaye* was an *ishyirahamwe* for disabled people and the members were preoccupied with making handcrafts for sale.

Within the *ishyirahamwe* I looked at two forms of significant relations namely gender and ethnicity in regard to reconciliation. The process of reconciliation was achieved on two ways: The first relation is regarding gender: Men and women worked together and were equal
partners that did the same tasks. Women were not only given recognition, but were also given the opportunity to take part in income generating work. The other relation was the ethnic level, which a sensitive aspect is looking at Rwanda’s tragic past. The fact that former enemies worked side by side functioned as a mechanism to bridge the ethic divide. Another factor was that victims and perpetrators also worked together. This strategy of working together for common causes as victim and as perpetrator seem to takes away stigma from both parties. I further noticed however that the topic of ethnicity was never mentioned among the members.

I regarded reconstruction in two ways, economical and social. Looking at reconstruction in economical terms the members of ishyirahamwe had the opportunity to undertake income generating activities and improve their livelihoods and participate in building up the rural economy. Reconstruction in social terms was meant to contribute in the remodelling of a new Rwandan identity through solidarity and interaction. In this process the ethnic label was taken away and replaced by unity of a population.

Another finding was that the ishyirahamwe that was dominated by men were much more resourceful that those dominated by women. I realized that these differences were due to the fact that the men dominated ishyirahamwe members were relatively prosperous prior to joining the ishyirahamwe. The additional home visits that I undertook proved my assumptions right.

Further my research discovered that the ishyirahamwe were synonymous with what can be regarded as private clubs that strictly provided help to members only. The non members were excluded from participating in activities and resources general. The majority of rural women and men were not members of any ishyirahamwe and the most vulnerable people mainly women and youth did not have access to membership in these particular clubs.

As already mentioned I focused my study in identifying the impact of 7 ishyirahamwe (associations) on rural livelihoods and gender. I examined to what degree membership promoted material and non material improvements to the member’s everyday existence. I further examined the women’s perceptions of being a member of an ishyirahamwe and what specific changes in gender roles they had encountered and that may be attributed to the
membership. The women made their own indicators for measuring the changes in women’s role and position which I recorded.

One of the most important improvements that were attributed to ishyirahamwe was that it had provided the members with the opportunity to diversify their livelihoods, thus ensuring food security. Diversification is when small scale farmers undertake various activities to make a living (Ellis 2000). Most small scale farmers used their crop for subsistence, not sale. In times of food insecurity due to drought or other factors the household would starve, because they did not have any other means to supply food. But due the ishyirahamwe in times of food insecurity the members had access to cash, livestock and food that they had in storage, thus avoiding hunger. Another function of the ishyirahamwe was that it was regarded as a place of learning, sensitization and common place for information dissemination.

**The household**

During my research I undertook home visits to some of the members’ household in able to attain additional information about their livelihoods, but the focus of my research was limited to the ishyirahamwe. I the household I looked at the activities that were undertaken by the various household members and could from the information that I obtained reveal the gender roles. In general women told me that they did the reproductive work while men were assigned to the productive work. Reproductive work was all work that was done within the domestic sphere which included taking care of children, collecting water and firewood, feeding livestock, preparing food and shopping at the market and household keeping.

The reproductive work was mainly done by women with some support from the children. In addition women also undertook other activities that were productive work. The husband did not do any of the above mentioned activities, even if he did not have work. A woman, Ingabire, in her 40s that had 3 children and worked full time both off-farm in the ishyirahamwe and in the household explained to me why her spouse did not assist her in the household as follows:” If my man fetches water, collects firewood or makes food everybody would mock him for undertaking woman’s work and he would lose his pride. I would be regarded as an incompetent wife for letting my husband do my tasks. It is not tolerated among women and men in our culture to share household duties. Although my workload is enormous and demanding, I have to be strong.”
Women that were members of *ishyirahamwe* owned and controlled the productive resources which mean that they were able to do reproductive and productive work. These women were role models and were contributing to narrow the gender gap in respect to being active in both domains of domestic and public.

**The project initiators**

My findings provide an insight on how external development actors have been active in creating an enabling environment for development. The program initiators have been attentive towards local people’s needs and aspirations and have facilitated capacity building and activities that enhances the human capital of the poor, predominantly women.

The project has succeeded in addressing rural people on their own terms and all stakeholders are in constant dialogue. To my knowledge this contact has contributed to create a commitment and a sense of ownership among the *ishyirahamwe* members.

According to my findings there were several factors that had contributed to make this particular development program a success:

1. The NGO had assured proximity to the rural poor by placing itself in the area which is positive in respect to being available at all times and communicate with the beneficiaries.
2. The majority of the members of the *ishyirahamwe* (associations) could not read and write. The initiators let the members themselves identify the activities they were capable of undertaking. Additionally the members were also offered opportunities to learn new skills along the way.
3. The activities were carried out in the local community, thus enhancing the rural economy. The poor infrastructure with bad roads and almost no means to collective transport would have made it difficult for the beneficiaries to move from area to area. Other constraints were the lack of electricity that restricted the portfolio of activities that could be conducted in the area.
4. Some of the project initiators were of Rwandan origin which seems to be an advantage to both parties. They were not only familiar with the local norms, culture and language but they were perceived as Rwandans by the locals. This gave the initiators the legitimacy to address the rural people in an open and confronting manner regarding
sensitive moral and ethical issues. The project initiators could talk openly about aspects of the traditional gender roles and how these roles had negatively affected development and participation of women and men, without being perceived as ethnocentric or ignorant.

**The development programs limitations**

The limitations which I observed were of practical and economical matter; mainly that the development program to a limited extent had improved the *ishyirahamwe* member’s livelihoods and that over time some of the activities that the members were undertaking were not sustainable. But considering the short time in which the Foundations program had existed I see a potential in the work that the NGO is doing in Rwabutenge.

I have got two examples that illustrate the issue of sustainability. The first example is related to an *ishyirahamwe* that do not have other working opportunities when the activities at the Foundation finishes and the other example is about two *ishyirahamwe* that are undertaking non profitable poultry activities.

The *ishyirahamwe Turwanye Ubukene* had made a contract with the Foundation. The group’s activity was to clear and till the land and the members were on a contract which entailed that they were paid on the basis of the amount of land that was prepared. According to the members they did not have any other working opportunities after the contract and they had little perception about their future.

The second example is taken from some of the members of the two *ishyirahamwe Duteraninkunga* and *Korandebe* that were undertaking poultry activities which they regarded as failure and non profitable. The activity failure was not recognised by the project facilitators. The chicken activities had been going on for quite a while and the members perceived the poultry as a predicament. During the group interviews I asked them to come with their own solutions to the problem and they came up with some fruitful and innovative answers which I will come back to later.

**2. Historical background**

**2.1. Country profile**

Rwanda, also called the land of a thousand hills, is situated in Central Africa, East of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Rwanda is the most densely populated country in Africa
with its total area of 26,338 sq. km and a population of approximately 8,440,820 (The World Fact book Rwanda, 2005).

Within the Rwandan border the population was prior to 1994 defined as consisting of three ethnic categories: The majority Hutu 84 percent, Tutsi 15 percent and the minority Twa 1% (The World Fact book Rwanda, 2005). In contemporary Rwanda due to the genocide of 1994, the ethnic categories, Hutu Tutsi and Twa are officially replaced with one Rwanda identity (Fawcett, 2003).

The official languages are Kinyarwanda, English, French and Kiswahili (The World Fact book Rwanda, 2005). Kinyarwanda is a universal Bantu vernacular spoken by virtually all Rwandans. While French and English are usually spoken by the educated segment of the population people and by Rwandans that came back from exile in neighbouring countries after the genocide. Additionally Kiswahili is widely used in commercial centres.

The arable land surface is 18,740 sq. km and 90 per cent of the population which is mainly rural is engaged in agriculture, mainly for subsistence. Rwanda is landlocked with a few natural resources and minimal industry. The primary foreign exchange earners are coffee and tea. The genocide decimated Rwanda’s fragile economical base and severely impoverished the population in particularly women (The World Fact book Rwanda, 2005).

The religious composition is diverse and numbers from 2001 show that the majority of the population, are Roman Catholics with 56, 5 per cent. The second biggest religious affiliation is Protestant with 26 per cent, the third biggest are the Adventist that number 11. percent. The fifth largest religious community is Muslim with 4,6 percent, and finally the indigenous beliefs that number 0,1per cent and the none believers account for 1,7 percent (The World Fact book Rwanda, 2005).

Historically in the Rwandan culture, people have honoured *Imana* who is seen as the supreme creator of the universe. According to Solange3 a women who is in her 50s and was born in Rwanda, the term *Imana* used to refer to a specific God. Solange explained the situation as follows:” *Imana* used to refer to *Ryangombe*. *Ryangombe* was worshiped through rituals which were conducted in the household. The rituals entailed prayers and giving *Ryangombe*

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3Interview conducted in Oslo, 26.06.2006
milk and sorghum. After the Belgians arrival Imana came to refer to the European God, but the term Imana can also be applied on Allah, the Muslim God.” Solange further explained that people in Rwanda had additional cultural beliefs: Solange: “In Rwandan culture the respect for ancestral spirits is widespread and still strong.”

2.2 The Genocide of 1994

In 1994 Rwanda came to the world’s attention when the world media set focus on the violence that was taking place in this small country. On April 6th, 20:30, the aeroplane carrying the Rwandan president Juvenal Habyarimana and president Cyprien Ntaryamira of Burundi was shot down by Kanombe airport, near the capital Kigali. Habyarimana was returning from Tanzania and was assumedly going to implement the Arusha Peace Accords which was signed in August 1993(Rwanda1, 2004).

It is still an enigma who shot down the presidents plane that evening and some sources point out that it might be the Hutu militia that was opposing the peace Accords (UN, 2004a). Immediately the extreme Hutu regime implemented what we today know as a carefully planned and highly organised extermination of a targeted population (Rwanda1, 2004).

It is estimated that from the 6th of April to Mid-July approximately 800,000 Tutsis and moderate Hutus were executed during a period of 100 days that the genocide lasted. The intension were to destroy wholly the Tutsi population and Hutu branded as politically moderate (Prunier, 1995). The atrocities were planned and organised by the late president Habyarimana, top government officials, including members of the so-called Provision Government, the presidential Guard, the national Gendarmerie, the Rwandan Government forces (FAR), the MRND-CDR militia( interahawe), local officials and an efficiently mobilised Hutu public(Rwanda1, 2004).

The preparations to carry out the genocide involved training of the militia, the arming of both the militia and some sections of the population, the establishment of the use of a hate radio called Radio Television Libre de Mille Collines and the distributions of the lists of those who were to be targeted (Prunier, 1995). At the time, when the genocide started, the United Nations had a peacekeeping force, the United Nations Assistance for Rwanda (UNAMIR) stationed in Rwanda with 2500 troops. During the escalation of the violence the troops were withdrawn (Rwanda1, 2004).
This act committed in Rwanda was later to be legally determined as genocide. The term genocide is legally defined in article 2, in the International Genocide Convention of 1948 as: act committed with the intention to destroy, wholly or in part, a national ethnic racial or religious group, such as:

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 birth within the group.
e) Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.

(United Nations Genocide Convention, 1948) (UN, 2004c).

The genocide turned people that had been living together in peace into enemies. Hutu neighbours hunted down and killed their Tutsi neighbours. Women and children, the young and the old, as well as men, were slaughtered. The killers violated every traditional sanctuary and people were killed regardless of being in a church, hospital or school. The killings were committed with machetes, guns and grenades (Waller, 1996).

Additionally it was extensive use of rape of women as weapon of war. Women and young girls were particularly targeted and raped. Recent estimates suggests that between 250 000 to 500 000 women experienced sexual assault and rape (Stensrud and Husby, 2005). The genocide led to additional two million people, displaced as refugees outside Rwanda, while one million became internally displaced (Prunier, 1995).

The role of the UN

It is widely acknowledged that the member states of the UN Security Council failed the people of Rwanda. Instead of reinforcing, the United Nations decided to withdraw their troops (Waller, 1996). According to the U. N Secretary General the lack of reinforcement had also occurred during the genocide in Bosnia: “Unfortunately, genocide happened again, in Srebrenica in 1995, which is the worst massacre in Europe since the Holocaust in 1939-1945 during the Second World War. UN peace keeping troops were present in Bosnia during the
war in 1992-1995, and like the Rwanda experience, no reinforcement was done” (Annan, 2004).

According to Annan the genocides in both the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda could have been prevented and he attributed the failure of not intervening to the International community’s lack of will, not capacity (Annan, 2004).

The international community did have a clear obligation to prevent genocides in Rwanda and former Yugoslavia, as stated under the article 1 in the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (1948): “The contracting parties confirm that genocide, whether committed in time of peace or in time of war, is a crime under the international law, which they undertake to prevent and to punish (UN, 2004b).”

On May, the 7th 1998, in Kigali U.N Secretary General, Kofi apologized to the Parliament of Rwanda: “….Looking back now, we see the signs which then were not recognized. Now we know that what we did was not nearly enough, not enough to save Rwanda from itself, not enough to honour the ideals for which the United Nations exist. We will not deny that, in their greatest hour of need, the world failed the people of Rwanda (Annan, 1998).”

At the Stockholm International Forum in 2004 the U.N Secretary General, Kofi Annan gave recommendations of how to improve the United Nations capacity for action and the establishment of a system of early warning. Annan suggested that all the members’ states of the Genocide Convection should consider setting up a Committee on the Prevention of Genocide. The committee’s role would meet to meet on regular basis to review reports and make recommendations for action (Annan, 2004). Further Annan mentioned that the UN should additionally consider establishing a Special Rapporteur on the prevention of genocide. The Rapporteur would report directly to the Security Council and contribute to making a clear link between massive and systematic violations of human rights and threats to international peace and security. This way the UN would improve their capacity for action (Annan, 2004).

Like any other history, the history of Rwanda is controversial and often used to serve those that are telling it. I am going to give a brief historical account that explains how the colonial
construct of Hutu and Tutsi created deep cleavages between the two groups and how this may have been one out of many factors that eventually led to the genocide in 1994.

2.3 Prior to the Colonial era

The social stratification

Prior to the arrival of the Belgians, Rwandan society was a well organised into complicated administrative systems. In Rwanda the king (mwami) was an absolute monarch and he could act as the supreme judge and change any custom. The mwami was omnipotent and was considered sacred and they were all of Tutsi origin (Prunier, 1995).

The mwami ruled through tree categories of chiefs; cattle chiefs, land chiefs and military chiefs the chiefs were predominately of Tutsi origin especially the cattle and military chiefs. In the hierarchical society the Tutsi had occupied all position of power while the Hutu and Twa were represented in the lower ranks of administration (Prunier, 1995).

The relationship between ordinary Tutsi, Hutu and Twa was one of mutual benefit, mainly through the exchange of their labour. The Hutu were tied to their Tutsi chiefs by the system of patronage called Ubuhake. The patron has the right to control the client’s access to Pasteur or to cattle, and to military protection (Prunier1995). Under mwami Rwabugeri the Ubuhake lost its aspect of reciprocity and became was transformed into Ubuletwa, forced labour (Prunier, 1995).

Under mwami Rwabugiri (1860-95) not all Tutsi were privileged or well off. The privileged Tutsi belonged to the elite that were related to the mwami. While the majority petits Tutsi were given petty privileges and the chance to escape the heavy burden of forced labour Ubuletwa. To be Tutsi weather a petits Tutsi or elite was however associated with relative power and access to resources (Prunier, 1995).

The social mobility
The boundaries between Tutsi and Hutu were softened by a degree of social mobility. A Hutu lineage would become *icyhuture*, de-Hutuised, i.e. Tutsified by accessing cattle and thus have achieved an upward social mobility (Prunier, 1995). Similar a poor Tutsi who had lost all his cows and had to cultivate land to survive would have experienced the process of *umuwore* (fallen) i.e. Hutuised. This would be attributed to his whole lineage, not just to him as individual (Prunier, 1995). Likewise the practice of marriage would tend to reinforce both trends of upward and downward social mobility. This practice portrays the Hutu and Tutsi as social groups, due to the fact that it is possible to move from one group identity to another all depending on the individual lineages economical status (Prunier, 1995).

2.4 **The Colonial era and the creation of a myth**

Rwanda became a German protectorate from 1879 until 1916 when the Germans had to leave the country into the hands of the Belgians that ruled the country up to 1962 (Waller, 1996). In 1935, the Belgian colonial regime introduced identity cards that stated people as Hutu, Tutsi and Twa (Rwanda1, 2004). The racial colonial perception viewed the Tutsi as different and racial superior and regarded the Hutu and Twa as belonging to an absolutely inferior order (Prunier, 1995). The Tutsi were placed in the administration and became the governing class on the basis of what is known as the Hamitic hypothesis (Mamdani, 2001). The Hamitic hypothesis is an ancient biblical myth that portrays the Hamites as decedents of Noah, son of Ham. Ham and all his descendants were cursed in becoming black by his father. Henceforth, Ham and all his decedents turned black. The Hamites were considered black, but not Negro and they merged as subject races in colonial Africa (Mamdani, 2001).

The process of upgrading the Tutsi to a superior race was described by Prunier (1995) as cultural mythology that became real, i.e. where the social and political actors moved by degrees from their real world and into the mythological script which had been written for them. Hence the colonisers had not only manufactured antagonism between Hutu and Tutsi by the method of divide and rule, but they had absent minded created forces that would break out in both 1959 and again in 1994(Prunier,1995).
2.5 The origins of Tutsi and Hutu

Since the days of colonialism the issue of Hutu and Tutsi origin had been scrutinized by many scholars and after the genocide a renewed interest for this issue has risen dramatically (Mamdani 2001). According to Mamdani (2001) the post-genocide era has generated two academic opposed views on the issue of common origin of the Hutu and Tutsi. At the one end there are those who claim that there is no difference between Hutu and Tutsi or that the relative differences can only be attributed to socio economical differences and in the other end there are those who argue that there is indeed an ethnic difference between the two groups (Mamdani, 2001).

The two views are recognised as belonging to a colonial and anti colonial standpoint. The colonial standpoint can be traced back to the colonial time where the official discourse claimed that the Hutu and Tutsi had different origin. While the anti colonial stance argue that the Tutsi and Hutu are in fact of same origin and that the difference were constructed by colonialism (Mamdani, 2001).

Different schools of thoughts in search of the origins of Hutu and Tutsi

At least four types of studies have contributed to the literature that focuses on the difference between the Hutu and Tutsi. These scholars base their studies on the assumption that the Tutsi migrated to Rwanda from elsewhere. This type of literature can be divided into four main categories (Mamdani, 2001). The first literature came from the physical anthropologist that studied differences between the Hutu and Tutsi on the basis of Phenotype, mainly on the physical height and physiognomy (Mamdani, 2001). The second type of literature undertaken by a combination of physical anthropologist and natural scientists were preoccupied with the issue of genotype which has to do with blood factors. They based their assumptions on two factors: the presence of the sickle cell trait in the human body and the prevalent ability among adults to digest lactose, which is a milk sugar (Mamdani, 2001). The third type of literature has emerged from cultural anthropology and focused on the peoples of the Great Lakes region and their memory (Mamdani, 2001). The last body of literature was engaged with archaeological and linguistic features (Mamdani, 2001).
I will briefly give an account of the four categories beginning chronologically in time. The first study was undertaken by the Colonial physical anthropologist. They were preoccupied with the visual differences, which showed that on average the Tutsi seem to be taller than the Hutu. Based on this observation they stated that the Hutu and Tutsi were two different people that came from different places. They formulated the migration hypothesis, which stated that the ancestors of the Hutu and Tutsi migrated into the Great Lakes region as two different groups (Mamdani, 2001).

More recent studies pay less attention to phenotype and turned to genotype which had to do with blood factors. The presence of the sickle cell trait was taken as a marker of race. Studies concluded that the sickle cell trait was common among Hutu and the neighbouring population, but virtually absent among Tutsi. Further the prevalence of this sickle trait cell was high among people that lived in area with malaria. The physical anthropologist and natural scientists concluded that the Tutsi ancestors had probably migrated from a relatively malaria free environment (Mamdani, 2001). The same body of literature also introduced that the ability to digest lactose is limited in most human population, except for those who belonged to a pastoral nomadic population. The Tutsi had through a process of natural selection over millennia adopted a gene (allele) that accounts for their high lactose absorption capacity (Mamdani, 2001).

The cultural anthropologists based their work on pre-colonial myth that was recorded from the pre colonial anthropologist and explorers, thus reviving old myths. Consequently without convincing of evidence the anthropologists linked the Tutsi’s ancestors to South Eastern Ethiopia and Southern Somalia (Mamdani, 2001).

The archaeological literature however displayed a different view than their predecessors, by actually placing the origins of Tutsi within the Great Lakes region. These scholars purposed on the basis of archaeological evidence that the Tutsi may be of ancient East Africans origin and named them elongated East Africans. The elongated African’s physical features distinctiveness attested to successful adoption to the dry arid climate over millennia. The Masaii of Kenya and the Fulani of the West Africa were classified as belonging to this group (Mamdani, 2001).
The body of literature that claimed a separate origin viewpoint was supported by a combination of colonial anthropologists led by John Seligman, explorers by John Hanning Speke, and missionaries followed Father Leon Classe. According to Mamdani (2001) the whole group of authors faithfully believed in the Hamitic Hypothesis.

The other view that is opposed to the classical different origin perspective was the anti colonialists, which highlighted sameness in origin. This literature focused on exiting realities such as the fact that the two groups belonged to the same culture, spoke common language and practiced cohabitation and intermarriage. From the point of view of the anti colonialists these realities placed the Tutsi and Hutu within same ethnic group (Mamdani, 2001).

Within the sameness view the differences between Hutu and Tutsi were not placed in the domain of origin, but were attributed to socio economical factors such as class and division of labour. Following Mamdani (2001) the class difference referred to difference between rich and poor and the division of labour between agriculturalists and pastoralists. The anti colonialists argued that these were types of difference that would normally exist within a single people, in any given culture.

Above I have given a simplified account of the body of literature on the origins of the Hutu and Tutsi. All the entire views can without exception be argued and discussed in a detail which is not my intensions for mentioning these views. My intention with highlighting these perspectives has been to show how complicated and value laden the discussion of Hutu and Tutsi origin actually was. In addition I wished to portray the mass fabrication of literature of the colonial construction of the categories Hutu and Tutsi. These categories led to the social, political and economical marginalization of the Hutu population under the colonial rule. This is so because later the same categories were applied in the official discourse during the first and second Hutu republic. But during these periods it was the Hutu that were privileged through access to resources, not the Tutsi (Prunier, 1995).

As I have described above in the historical accounts of Rwanda, ethnicity has been used as a tool to include or exclude segments of the population through the different regimes in Rwanda. During the colonial time the privileges were restricted to Tutsi and later during the First and Second republic the Hutu was the social group that had access to political and economical power. These above mentioned facts leads us to the notion of the constructed or
invented nature of ethnicity (Sollors, 1989, cited in Guibernau and Rex 1997) and the situational theory of ethnicity that is derived from the work of Fredrik Barth (Barth 1959; 1969). According to Barth and his theory, ethnic boundaries are invented by political leaders and intellectuals for purpose of social manipulation, at least related to specific social and political projects.

2.6 Post-independence

The first and second Hutu republic (1959-1990)

The first major conflict in Rwandan history was in the 1959 Muyaga (strong wind) Hutu revolution. The Muyaga revolt was facilitated by a shift in Belgian policy, where the Tutsi lost their social and political positions to the Hutu by the active support of the Catholic Church (Bigagaza et al. 2002). The period between 1959 and 1990 marked an era where Tutsis were excluded from all participation in the Rwandan society (Waller, 1996). The 1959 Muyaga caused hundreds of thousands of deaths and a population of almost 2 millions in Diaspora in neighbouring countries like Uganda, Tanzania, Congo (DRC) and Burundi (Rwanda1, 2004).

The period from 1959 up to the civil war in 1990 was marked with ethnic violence against Tutsi minority. The Hutu governments nourished the ethnic division to justify their exclusive claim to power both in the first republic with President Gregoire Kayibanda and later in the second republic with President Juvenal Habyarimana. The Kayibanda regime practiced occasional massacre against the minority Tutsi as means to keep peace (Rwand1, 2004). In 1965 Rwanda was becoming a one party state under MDR/PARMEHUTU which became according to Rwanda1(2004) the architect behind the racist regime.

In 1973 president Kayibanda was deposed in a coup d’etat that brought Major General Habyarimana to power. All politicians from the first republic were killed. In 1975 the president formed a party, The Mouvement Revolutionnaire Nationale pour le Development (MRND) a single ruling party which made him the sole candidate in what was denoted as elections (Prunier, 1995).
The Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) was formed by refugees in exile, with an objective to return to Rwanda and create a new regime. During the period between 1990 and 1994 the RPF did numerous military attempts to take control over Kigali and get rid of the Habyarimana regime (Rwanda1, 2004).

2.7 The civil war 1990-1994

October 1st 1990 was the beginning of the civil war between the government and Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF). The RPF predominately consist of Tutsi refugees from Uganda launched a massive attack on Rwanda. French, Belgium and the Democratic Republic of Congo (Zaire) sent troops to protect the Rwandan regime (Rwanda1, 2004). The period between 1990 and 1992 were violent and unstable and all economic activity had halted. Additionally one tenth of the population was displaced (Ibid.).

As the war intensified the two parties RPF and the Habyarimana regimes agreed to seek peaceful ways to resolve the conflict. On 29th of March 1992 in the Democratic Republic of Congo the N’sele Ceasefire Agreement was signed. This agreement did not lead to any serious political negotiations to end the armed conflict (Rwanda1, 2004).

The agreement was therefore never implemented and civil war went on until the second attempt of restoring peace took place in Arusha in Tanzania. The Arusha peace agreement was signed in August 4th in 1993 by both parties. The agreement was to facilitate that all Rwandese refugees could safely return to Rwanda and the establishment of a state of rule none of the agreements were ever practiced (Rwanda1, 2004).

2.8 The post-genocide environment

The formation of political parties

On the 4th of July 1994 the genocide regime collapsed and the Rwandan patriotic front (RPF) took over Kigali. The RPF was a rebel groups composed mainly, but not exclusively of Tutsi refugees (Rwanda1, 2004). The RPF established the Government of National Unity together with four other political parties which were the Liberal party (PL), the Social Democratic Party
(PSD), the Christian Democratic Party (PDC) and the Republic Democratic Movement (MDR) (Rwanda1, 2004).

After some weeks the National Assembly was formed and additional three parties emerged, namely the Islamic party (PDI), the Socialist party (PSR) and the Democratic Union of Rwandese People (UDPR) (Rwanda1, 2004). A new constitution was adopted in 4th of June in 2003 and the president of Rwanda since 22 April in 2000 is Paul Kagame (World Fact book Rwanda, 2004).

**Justice**

In the aftermath of the genocide the GoR passed the law for the trial and punishment of those responsible for genocide in Rwanda. Thousands have been arrested and are awaiting trial. Others have been tried and convicted or realised on the grounds of lack of evidence. It is however vital for that reconciliation process that the Rwandans feel that justice has been served (Government of Rwanda, 2004c).

After the genocide, the prisons were full with detainees waiting to have their case tried. The Rwandan criminal justice system was severely under pressure due to the facts that many professionals were killed during the genocide, over crowded prisons and the countries economic constraints (Government of Rwanda, 2004c). The criminal justice system did not have the capacity to judge all the detainees, that were about 107,000 Rwandese and approximately 5,500 of them were women (Learning-Oriented Assessment, 2002). As a response to the criminal justice system’s enormous workload the GoR initiated a participatory form of justice that draws from the experience of pre-colonial Rwandan society *Gacaca*. Further an International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda has been established in Tanzania in Arusha to persecute the category1 crimes (Government of Rwanda, 2004c).

The genocide suspects were categorised according to the crimes they were accused of. Category 1 is the category that the planners behind the genocide placed in. They will be tried in the conventional courts. Category 2, 3 and 4 are the category where involvement in the genocide was slightly less serious and they are tried in *Gacaca* courts (Government of Rwanda, 2004c).
In 2002 the Gacaca judiciary system was reintroduced. The Gacaca is based on a traditional model inspired by the old Rwandan judiciary tradition. The Gacaca are decentralized jurisdictions down to the level of the smallest administrative unit and they judge less serious crimes related to the genocide. The judges are called inyangamugayo which means honest persons and they serve in a group of twelve with both sexes represented. The inyangamugayos are elected by the community on the basis of their moral values and they must be over 18 years of age (Rwanda1, 2004).

The Peace and Reconciliation Committee

1998 the GoR established a Unity and Reconciliation Commission, charged with the responsibility of educating and mobilizing the population for unity and reconciliation. The Commission has conducted seminars, courses, and debates in the whole country, aimed at rebuilding trust and confidence within and between communities (Government of Rwanda, 2004c).

The Rwandan economy

As already mentioned Rwanda is a landlocked country with few natural resources and minimal industry. The country is the most densely populated and one of the poorest countries the African. Approximately 90 per cent of the population is engaged in agriculture, manly subsistence. As a result, the food export remains poor, since the food produced is used for subsistence. The Food production does not keep pace with the population growth and as a consequence many people lack adequate feeding (World Fact book Rwanda, 2004).

Rwandans foreign exchange is based on coffee and tea. Although Rwanda economy still suffers from the consequences of the 1994 genocide it has managed to stabilize and rehabilitate the economy to pre-1994 levels. The poverty levels are however higher today. The GDP has rebounded and the inflation is stable (World Fact book Rwanda, 2004). The civil war and genocide caused a dramatic decline of wildlife and tourism. Tourism was Rwanda’s third largest earner of foreign exchange in 1989 (Waller, 1996). Rwanda is therefore heavily dependent on foreign aid and was approved the IMF and World Banks Heavily Indebted Poor

**Human and material problems in post genocide Rwanda**

Ten years later the Government has achieved rapid institutional reconstruction and relatively good bureaucratic governance, but it is also criticised for concentrating power and wealth in the hands of a few and for violating human rights in Rwanda and abroad and conducting false democratisation politics (Reyntjens, 2004).

On July 19th 1994, Rwanda was a country where all social fabrics were torn apart, in human terms: 1.1 million dead, 2 million refugees abroad, over 1 million internally displaced and tens of thousands of deeply physiologically traumatised genocide survivors and old case load (i.e. Tutsi from the 1959 revolution) refugees returned in a chaotic fashion (Reyntjens, 2004). In additional the material damage within Rwanda was enormous: infrastructure was destroyed, banks and businesses were plundered the civil service, the judicial system, health care and education services were in ruins and crops and livestock was lost and people were displaced within and outside the country’s borders (Reyntjens, 2004).

Following this dramatic situation the government of Rwanda's post-war agenda of social integration focused on the reintegration of returnees, internally displaced persons and demobilised soldiers (Sørensen, 1998).

**The refugees**

The turmoil and mass flight to neighbouring countries contributed to destabilisation of the Great lakes region and many Rwandans faced an uncertain refugee future in Diaspora⁴. A Diaspora is said to exist when an ethnic group suffers some kind of traumatic event which leads to the dispersal of its members, who to different degrees wish to return to their homeland (Guibernau and Rex, 1997). Most of the refugees have returned to Rwanda, but approximately 10, 000 Hutu refugees remain in the neighbouring countries (The World Fact book Rwanda, 2005).

⁴ Interview conducted with a UNHCR representative in Kigali, 10.10.2005.
These numbers mentioned above clearly show that not all refugees both the old case load from 1959 and the new caseload from 1994 necessarily have the desire to return to Rwanda. The situation of Rwandese Diaspora is complex and all refugees have different experiences and reasons to why they are living in Diaspora. I will briefly distinguish between the experiences of the Ugandan old case load and the new case load in camps in the Great Lake Region. The refugees that fled to Uganda in 1959 experienced the situation as difficult during the reign of president Obote. According to a Rwandan refugee, Solange, the Rwandan refugees were stigmatized and were excluded from education and jobs. In order to able to escape the stigma of being a foreigner and get access to jobs and education many of these migrants changed their Rwandan names into Ankole names and tried to assimilate into the Ugandan culture. The Rwandans were not granted full citizenship, but they could however have access to land, if they had money to buy it. The Tutsi refugees in Uganda still held on to some kind of myth of return to Rwanda and the majority taught their children and grand children Kinyarwanda and held on to the Rwandan culture.

Solange told me about her experience of being a Rwanda refugee in Uganda. She left Rwanda during the Hutu revolution in 1959 with her family: Solange:” We fled with our cows and other personal belongings leaving our friends, houses and land behind to face a new and uncertain future in an another country. During the first years of my childhood my whole family stayed in Rukinga refugee camp in Mbarara and we were not allowed to move out of the refugee boundaries. After few years we were given permission to move freely in Uganda. I wanted to study and I was forced to change my Rwandese name into a Ugandan name to get enrolled in school”. She further recalls her citizenship status in Uganda: Solange:” I did not have access to passport and I was not allowed to vote. I did not vote until I was in my 30s, when I acquired a Norwegian citizenship”.

The other communities of refugees are those belonging to the new caseload of migrants that either flees in the civil war 1990s or during the genocide in fear of reprisals. The majority was part of the mass flight during the genocide and they regard their situation as migrants as temporary and envisage a change in political circumstances before considering return to

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5 Interview conducted with a UNHCR representative in Kigali, 10.10.2005.

6 Interview conducted in Oslo, 10.06.2006.
Rwanda. They are either staying in refugee camps in Uganda, Tanzania, DRC or Burundi. Some of the refugees are *interahamwe* (ex militia from Rwanda) or ex-FAR who is the Rwandan army that participated in the genocide⁷.

Many of these refugees want to return but are subject to constant manipulation by *interahamwe* that infiltrates the camps and tells them that they will be imprisoned when they return to Rwanda. The problem that the UNHCR faces in the refugee camps is that they can not tell the difference between who is militia and who is ordinary people. In the camps people lack contact to the outer world with no access to information education, and no future outlooks and they are therefore easy to manipulate⁸.

Many refugees fear to return on the basis of what they have been told by manipulators in the camp. They fear the *Gacaca* trials will end in conviction and not in reconciliation.

In the camps the UNHCR try to mitigate manipulation by sensitizing the refugees through assuring them that the aid workers are telling the “truth”. The camps are supposed to act as short term solution that offers food, medicine and shelter to the refugees. Many of the refugees have been in the camps for many years and the lack of will to repatriate has understandably caused problems and tension with the local people. According to the UNHCR the refugee issue is a challenge to all the countries that are involved and there are different needs within the different refugee communities, one size does not fit all⁹.

There are as many actors as there are solutions to the refugee problems. The hardliners that harbours the refugee camps within their internal borders have proposed that the refugees should be returned to Rwanda by force. The UNHCR however do not agree with a military approach of forced repatriation, but looks for other alternatives by using a “carrot”. One of the strategies of the UNHCR is to attract the refugees back to Rwanda by offering them alternative livelihood strategies apart from land which is scarce in Rwanda¹⁰.

**Possible causes of the genocide**

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⁷ Interview conducted with a UNHCR representative in Kigali, 10.10.2005.
⁸ Interview conducted with a UNHCR representative in Kigali, 10.10.2005.
⁹ Interview conducted with a UNHCR representative in Kigali, 10.10.2005.
¹⁰ Interview conducted with a UNHCR representative in Kigali, 10.10.2005.
The genocide in Rwanda has been researched by many scholars that have tried to find the root causes of the atrocity. Genocide has its specific causes according country and population, and in Rwanda the majority of academics agree on that there are many interrelated factors that together contributed to the mass killings such as high population density, land scarcity and political manipulation.

Bigagaza et al. (2002) believes that the cause of the genocide was land scarcity. He gives to factors contributing to land scarcity, one was population pressure and the other was inequitable distribution of land (Bigagaza et al. 2002). Statistics refer to Rwanda as the most densely populated country in Africa (329 per square km, against 29 square km in sub-Saharan Africa in 1989) and in the case of Rwanda population pressure resulted in land scarcity (Bigagaza et al. 2002). Secondly a significant amount of land was concentrated in the hands of powerful elite, which led to an inequitable distributed among the rest of the population (Bigagaza et al. 2002).

Prunier (1995) also believes that the causes of the genocide can partly be attributed to the population density and land scarcity. He believes that ordinary people killed to reduce the population, thus increase their access to scarce land. Another critical factor that led to the genocide was the political manipulation of the population by the leaders (Prunier, 1995).

Mc Nairn (2004) suggests that the genocide was triggered by a manipulating political regime that exploited the population. The hatred towards Tutsi and moderate Hutus was manufactured in a context in which the Hutu population were living under conditions of severe poverty and powerlessness. The popular was therefore easy to manipulate with promises of a better life (McNairn, 2004).

Addressing the causes of the 1994 genocide is very important in respect to the reconciliation and reconstruction process of Rwanda. Every genocide and conflict has its county specific causes. In the Rwandan context it is widely acknowledged among scholars such as Prunier (1995), McNairn (2004), Bigagaza et al. (2002) that the root causes of the genocide can be attributed to socio economical, political and historical factors such as lack of resources and mass poverty among the population and political manipulation. The Peace and Reconciliation Committee is the government structures that have been charged with the responsibility to educate the population about the causes of the genocide in a historical perspective. The
committee’s aim is to create trust and solidarity among the Rwandan population. A rural man that had fled to Congo during the genocide commented on the importance of the Committee’s work: Mutamba: “We must learn about the past to be able to go on. People do not talk about being Tutsi or Hutu because it is irrelevant; we are one people now, we are Banyarwanda.”

My participatory research which was conducted in rural Rwanda was aimed at observing how rural people participated in the ongoing reconciliation and reconstruction process of the country.

3. Study Area and the development program

Rwanda is decentralized into administrative units, from the highest level, Provinces, Districts, Sectors, and Cellules as the lowest level. My study was conducted between October and the beginning of December in 2005. The Foundation’s establishment which was my research area was situated in Rwanda’s rural area in the cellule of Runzenze in sector of Rwabutenge which is under the district of Kicukiro in the province of Kigali-Ville.

My target population lived and worked in the sector of Rwabutenge, which is situated 40 minutes drive from the capitol Kigali. The population of Rwabutenge is approximately 5,325 and the area consists of five cells; Runzenze, Rebero, Gatare, Murinja, and Nyabigugu.

Rwabutenge is a rural area and agriculture is the predominant livelihood activity among the population. The infrastructure is poor and there is no electricity in the area, which affected the activities that could be undertaken by the beneficiaries.

The development project is initiated and led by the French NGO “Rwandese Solidarity Association and it draws support from the “Youth Citizenship and Solidarity Foundation”. The Foundation offers a range of development activities which are socioeconomic, educational and cultural. The goal with these activities is to promote working opportunities for vulnerable people predominately women, reconciliation among villagers and thus reconstruction of a post Genocide society. The Foundation did not have anything to do with the people’s formation of associations/organisations. The associations function as basic units through which members could solve their socioeconomic problems. The Kinyarwanda word for association is *ishyirahamwe*. The total numbers of *ishyirahamwe* which are connected to

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11 Information attained from Norman Mudenge that had personal communication with the major of Kicukiro district in Kigali, 17.05.2006.
the Foundation are 11, but my study focused on 7 *ishyirahamwe*. My decision to use 7 groups in the research was based on two factors. The first factor was time constraint and the second was because the 4 other *ishyriahamwe* had not yet started up and were not working as organised units. In this specific research using them as basis for analysis would not be fruitful and the data would only be based on speculations. The target group was the members of the 7 *ishyirahamwe* that were connected to the Foundation. The *ishyirahamwe* members were of both sexes.

### 3.1 Methodology: Field methods

I chose to do my field studies in Rwanda based on tree reasons: The first reason was that the country was recovering from genocide and I wanted to learn about the post-genocide context. The second reason was that in the aftermath of the genocide the GoR had adopted a strong gender policy and I wanted to examine if the policies and legislations had been successfully translated into practice on grassroots’ level. Finally I chose Rwanda because I am of Rwandan origin and I had a desire to get to know Rwanda.

My point of departure is that although I refer to the informants as the rural people, the vulnerable people, the poor people, the women and the men, I am fully aware of the danger of presenting people as a homogeneous group. I fully recognise that the informants are individual actors with different experiences, status, needs and motives. On the other hand I also acknowledge that within my research domain it is important to be able to categorize people’s experiences, behaviours and values; in able to say something general about the specific group of people I am researching and their livelihoods. Further I would like to emphasize that the names used in this text are not the informants’ real names.

My research question is basically to assess if the GoR gender legislations and the participation in *ishyirahamwe* increased women’s empowerment and improved women’s status in the household and in the community. And further if the change in women’s status led to reduce gender asymmetry.

I found data to cover the issue by examining the livelihood strategies and capabilities of the *ishyirahamwe* members, both at *ishyirahamwe* level and the household level. However due to time constraint the research undertaken on household level was limited to a few households.
within each *ishyirahamwe*. Although my research unit was limited to the *ishyirahamwe* the information obtained from household visits contributed to giving me a more accurate picture of the member’s livelihoods and the gender relations within the household. I further used the household information to triangulate information obtained from focus group interviews.

The objective of my research was to illustrate that in this specific case women’s empowerment and gender equity can only be reached through the provision of income generating projects that explicitly target women and enhance their participation in the public domain.

**Research strategy**

I predominantly applied a Qualitative research strategy. Qualitative data was gathered by means of interviews with a number of respondents that ranged between 10 and 52 in their natural environment. This contributed to the research process by helping me to get an in-depth picture of the Rwandan culture and the respondents livelihood situation. Further it handed me the opportunity to capture features that effect the research questions.

Quantitative techniques helped me to moderate questions and use concepts defined by the respondents. As an example the respondents themselves defined criteria for well being. This gave room for understanding and respecting “emic” perspective as opposed to ethic perspective that represents a western point of view.

I additionally used Quantitative research methodology to collect data which could be coded and analysed numerically. Qualitative data was predominantly applied in the focus group interviews to calculate the value of the activities undertaken by the *ishyirahamwe*. I applied the livelihoods framework and the asset-access-activity approach to cover the *ishyirahamwe* status both economically and socially. The purpose was to examine the sustainability of the various activities and the *ishyirahamwe* as a unit.

**The interviews**

The interviews were given verbally in Kinyarwanda and then written down in English. All of the interviews were opening ended and Semi-structured, based on a list of questions. The same questions were administered to all the respondents. I utilised the interview guide
approach, making the interviews flexible, conversational and situational. The women and men would be very attentive and eager to answer the questions.

Language skills

The fact that I also speak Kinyarwanda handed me the opportunity of being able to take part in discussions and access additional information such as being able to listen to conversations and analysing discourses. This was important for my research for various reasons. First of all by listening to conversations I was able to understand what was meaningful and important for the informants from their point of view. This gave me a picture of who they were and what they wished for. It also made me aware of what they did not talk about, which I consider as important as what they mention. Secondly I was in liberty to take an active part in discussions which I felt as an important process of learning about the informant’s perceptions, attitudes and emic perspectives. In return they also got to know me and I also became aware of my own cultural prejudices.

To conduct an interview is never a simple task especially when the target group is not familiar with an interview setting. There is no doubt that having the language skills have helped me to correct various errors during interviews. In the beginning I experienced that when I asked questions the informants would give me answers that they assumed I wished to hear. After a while would take the opportunity to comment and confront them with the answers they had given me. My response made them realise that I was in search for genuine answers. Another challenge I faced was that informants could withhold information without being aware of it. I then learned that additional information usually came around when the note pad of the researcher was put away and the interview was terminated. The informant would proceed talking about other issues and during our conversation they would mention some details that they themselves did not consider as relevant to the interview. I would then return to my notepad.

At last I would like to mention two practical aspect of being able to comprehend a conversation. The first point is that the researcher may be able to speed the process of an interview, if many of the themes may already have been covered earlier during the conversation. The second point is related to research ethics. I experienced that in some context the informants would forget that I was a researcher and regard me as a friend. They would open themselves and reveal personal experiences. As a researcher I had an ethical
responsibility to respect and protect my informants by being able to analyze the difference between research issues and private issues.

**Reflexivity**

I had done some reflections regarding my role as a researcher prior to the research. I was positioned as a Kinyarwanda speaking female with Rwanda origin, educated and from a Western country. I had very little prior knowledge to Rwandan rural setting, because my relatives had been living in exile in Uganda since 1959 and I myself had been living in Norway. My background evoked curiosity among the informants and in many cases it was be articulated through a cross examination. I never experienced their questions as negative, but more as a sign of that they wanted to know what kind of person I am. Nevertheless my background seems to influence the interviews in many positive ways mainly by being able to come close to my informants. Some of the women would talk to me about intimate issues regarding gender problems such as family planning, condom use, hiv/aids. Many of them would ask me for advice. Others would talk about their experiences and loss during the genocide.

The majority of women had never travelled abroad and they were therefore curious about the western way of live and society. They had the notion of Europeans as “different kind of human beings” that had prosperity and never encountered problems of hunger, lack of education and bad health. One of the features of small places is that people know each other well. I experienced that a few people told me horrible rumours concerning other villagers and I decided not to let such talks effect my sense judgement and my work. Most of all I felt appreciated and welcome in Rwabutenge and because of this I did not feel lonely or like a stranger.

**The livelihoods framework**

I chose to utilise a framework for livelihood analysis called Livelihoods framework (Ellis, 2000) because I regard it as an appropriate approach to acquire knowledge about the lives of the rural poor. The framework analyses rural livelihoods by applying concepts such as assets, activities and access. I made the interview questions on the basis of these concepts. I constructed two different types of interviews based on the livelihood framework. One interview type was focus group interview conducted while the informants and I were working
together and the other type of interview was a household interview conducted at some of the informants’ respective homes. The goal was to identify if membership in *ishyirahamwe* had contributed positively or negatively to the livelihoods of the members.

**The focus group interviews**

The focus group interviews were aimed at collecting information about the assets, activities, claims and access that the group had (Ellis, 2000). I looked at the various activities that the group undertook and finally the claims and access that the members had to the assets by virtue of being a member of the specific *ishyirahamwe*. The goal was to capture the actual resources that the members had managed to accumulate in their work and what kind of opportunities these resources had given the group.

In brief, assets can be divided into five main categories of capital; natural capital, physical capital, human capital, financial capital and social capital (Ellis, 2000). The natural capital refers to the land that was utilised by the group for crop production. The physical capital refers to machines and tools that were used during their work. Human capital refers to education level and health status of the group. Financial capital refers to the stock of cash that the group had managed to earn, save and invest and had access to. Social capital in this case refers to the non material benefits that the members had in *ishyirahamwe* and additionally to their degree of support from Foundation.

The activities that were undertaken by the various groups were connected to agriculture and/or livestock raring. I also looked at the decision making process within the *ishyirahamwe* focusing on the dynamics in the group. My finding show that in the two male dominated *ishyirahamwe* Giramata and Kagarwa the decision making seem more authoritarian than in the other *ishyirahamwe*. Traditionally, Rwanda is culture where authority is respected (Learning-Oriented Assessment, 2002). During the focus group interviews the authority would either take lead or answer my questions or he would reformulate my questions and address the group on my behalf. As a response to this biased interview situation, I adopted a strategy where I directly addressed the informants by calling their names prior to asking the questions. This strategy made it difficult for the authority to intervene. Additionally the few women that were in Kagarwa and Giramata did not actively participate during the interviews. There was only one elderly woman from Kagarwa that participated actively.
The household interviews

The household interviews comprised of similar questions as the group interviews, but they were formulated differently to suit the household unit. I looked at how resources were allocated among individuals within the household; this is commonly referred to as intra household resource allocation (Quisumbing, 2003). I selected a representative sample of the various ishyirahamwe members that I visited in their homes. Briefly the interview focused on the households status in regard to income from own –account farming, crop income, and ownership of livestock and how this affected the livelihood. Additionally I examined the household’s access to off-farm income and access to capital (Ellis, 2000). The rural people possess different potential access to alternative activities and therefore different income sources. My findings show that the house holds that could pursue off-farm income by diversifying their livelihood had obtained food security and access to financial resources. The majority of the target group derived this kind of benefit from the ishyirahamwe membership.

I studied other parameters such as the human capital referring to the household’s health; access to basic needs service and access to basic education (Ellis, 2000). As a result of improved health and education the household and the individuals had the opportunity to command higher income and raise the productivity of labour. Most of my informants did not have any education and those who could afford it had their children in school. The general health situation seems fine, apart from children that had problems with recurrent malaria and stomach worms.

Gender relations in the household

The main purpose with the household interview was to identify the livelihood situation of the ishyirahamwe members. The home visits gave me the opportunity to observe the participants as individuals in their private domain. Additionally the information obtained from the group and household interviews gave me a picture of how and to what degree the resources gained through ishyirahamwe participation contributed to well being on the household level. The shortcoming of applying the household as a unit of reach is that there are some underlying assumptions that all family members share the same preferences and pool their resources (Quisumbing, 2003). The unitary model do not correspond with reality in
Rwabutenge. A good example from my findings is that women and men in the same household differ in regards to resources, responsibility and decision making. In most of homes that I visited, the man did not undertake reproductive work in the household, he owned the resources, he had the decision making power. But most of the women claimed that they owned the resources together with the man and that decisions that were taken in the household were taken by her and her spouse. In addition the women also mentioned that by divorce according to the customary law the men would take most of the resources. This practice is not coherent with the statutory law in Rwanda, where women have been given the right to claim property by divorce. The GoR has introduced a strong gender profile to combat the subordination of women in all domains, but this has not yet led to a real change in rural women’s situation. However I experienced several areas that the national gender policy had been translated to practice and one of the areas was related to the law of succession and inheritance. Many of the households’ members that I visited showed me their plots and explained that they would divide the plot in various stripes. Each child regardless of sex would inherit a stripe each. The switch from patrilineal inheritance pattern to inclusion of girls in regards to inheritance is a positive step towards gender equity.

My research applies a gender perspective as a tool for providing data on the distribution of roles and resources within the household. Looking at the activities that are undertaken by women and men in the household gives a picture of the gender based division in productive and reproductive work. The traditional gender roles mediate the access and control of resources on the basis of their sex. As mentioned above, in the vast majority of the rural population men are the ones in control over resources and decision-making.

Ishyirahamwe as Unit of research

In conventional livelihoods literature the household is usually regarded as the suitable social unit for livelihood research (Chambers and Conway, 1991, cited in Ellis, 2000: Mikkelsen, 2005: Bryman, 2004). Meanwhile in my research I have adopted the ishyirahamwe as the social unit of my analysis. In my case the ishyirahamwe seem to be appropriate for investigating relevant aspects of a distinct group of people’s livelihoods and survival strategies. The household data that I obtained was used as background information that would enable me to gather knowledge on gender relations and the impact of gender polices in Rwabutenge.
4 Results and discussions

4.1 Engendering politics

In Rwanda the tradition of woman’s organizing in associations (*ishyirahamwe*) can be dated back to the time of independence. These grass root organizations were led by women that went together to create work opportunities and income. In the early 90s during Habyarimana regime women were prohibited to undertake income generating activities related to commerce, unless they had the husband’s consent (Learning-Oriented Assessment, 2002). Like any other country in the world gender inequality exist both in hidden and visible ways in Rwanda. In a country like Norway gender inequality are hidden and can be identified along other dimensions such as through discrimination in work and salary. In Rwanda the inequality can be characterized as more visible and can be traced in women’s lack of access to resources and rights. Gender asymmetry based on traditional cultural beliefs, attitudes, and practices has resulted in ongoing political and social marginalization of women. Rwanda ranks 135 out of 146 on the gender development index in the UNDP 2002 report (McNairn, 2004).

After the genocide in 1994 the majority of the survivors were women and they played a significant role in the rebuilding of the country. As a response to the specific conditions the government of National Unity (GoR) initiated policies and legislative changes aimed to promote gender equity and woman’s empowerment. Consequently Rwandan women regardless of class and ethnicity were encouraged to create *ishyirahamwe* as a strategy for enabling development and improving their livelihoods (Learning-Oriented Assessment, 2002).

The government’s gender police

The GoR has had commitment and political will to address gender issues by the means of policy formulation and legislative changes, articulated in the National Gender Policy. Although I encountered significant gaps between police and practice, my research still identifies some areas that the national gender police have had a significant influence on the grass roots such as within the *ishyirahamwe* organisations.
The political efforts aimed at creating a society with gender equity are the provision of the law of Matrimonial Regimes, Succession and Liberties which provides women with legal guarantees related to inheritance and property rights and the mainstreaming of gender equity into national strategies such as the Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS) and the decentralization policy (Learning-Oriented Assessment, 2002).

A. The Law of Matrimonial Regimes, Succession and Liberties

With regard to legislation, the law of Matrimonial Regimes, Succession and Liberties has made significant chances in many Rwandan women’s lives. The law endorses the principle that women may own property and inherit on an equal basis as their brothers. Additionally the law requires shared ownership of marital property, which enables a woman to claim ownership of resources by divorce (Learning-Oriented Assessment, 2002). Unfortunately the law of Matrimonial regimes has serious shortcomings because it does not apply and protect the rights of ownership for women that have married under customary law by divorce (Learning-Oriented Assessment, 2002).

At the national level positive processes have been taking place in terms of policy making and legal reforms, but tracing these impacts on grassroots level among ordinary women remains a challenge for the law makers, the grass roots and scholars.

B. Decentralization and community participation

Prior to the genocide of 1994 the Rwandan government structure was highly centralized and power remained in the centre, thus excluding the peripheries from participation. Today the principle of decentralization enables powers, authority, functions and responsibilities and resources to be transferred from central to local (Provincial) governments. Since 1996 Rwanda’s GoR has aimed to create a governing structure based on participation and inclusiveness of an all levels of the population and particularly the grass roots. The national decentralization structure managed by the Ministry of Local Government (MINALOC) is aimed at promoting reconciliation and development. The decentralization policy represents the population from “below” through election processes that empowers locally elected leaders and community development committees to represent the rural poor (McNairn, 2004). Gender mainstreaming has been an important element in the decentralization process and has included gender analysis and gender budgeting (Learning-Oriented Assessment, 2002).
In the context of decentralization the Ministry of Gender and Women in Development (MIGEPROFE), the Forum of Women Parliamentarians at the national level and Woman’s Councils at the local level has functioned as vehicles to promoting and mainstreaming gender issues through laws and policies (McNairn, 2004).

In reality there are several constraints connected to mainstreaming gender issues in the political and social realms. One of problems is the limited capacity to mainstream gender in institutions within government and civil society due to lack of financial resources. The other problems are related to traditional attitudes and practices that undermine gender equity among the grass roots. In Rwandan social structure men’s dominance is perceived as legitimate and natural which causes critical problems to gender mainstreaming, equity and development (Learning-Oriented Assessment, 2002).

In post genocide context the need for reconciliation is critical and the strategy that is applied to meet this issue must be sensitive to local needs and priorities. The issues connected to reconciliation have been addressed by the National Unity and Reconciliation Commission (NURC). The NURC has been in charge of fostering dialogue on the historical dimensions and causes of the genocide.

C. National Unity and Reconciliation Commission

As part of the reconciliation process the National Unity and Reconciliation Commission’s (NURC) was enacted in 1999 to undertake the task of ensuring that reconciliation was mainstreamed through government, civil society and the private sector (McNairn, 2004).

On local level the reconciliation was manifested by the implementation of community-based traditional Gacaca juridical courts (McNairn 2004). In the traditional Rwandan Gacaca women were prohibited to participate, but in contemporary Rwanda due to the influence of the gender policy women are included in the Gacaca processes both as judges and participants (Learning-Oriented Assessment, 2002).

For a recovering country like Rwanda reconciliation at all levels of society is important, but at the same time other issues such as the poverty among the majority of the population have to be resolved. Rwanda is as already mentioned one of the poorest countries in the world,
ranking 159 out of 173 on the Human Development index of 2004. Approximately 60 per cent of the population live in poverty and the majority resides in the rural area. Poverty is most prevalent in woman- headed and child- headed households (McNairn, 2004). The goals of reconciliation can only be reached if people are able to realise their capabilities such as being able to meet their basic needs and participate socially. In Rwandan context modern and traditional strategies of poverty alleviation are applied side by side such as the national poverty reduction strategy and *Ubudehe* as instruments to address the problems of poverty.

**D. The Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper**

The Rwandan Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper, prepared to qualify for Highly Indebted Poor Countries debt relief funding cites gender equity as a priority area. The paper particularly focuses on the need for social services such as health, education and agriculture services and to ensure equal access, utilization and impact between women and men, girls and boys (Learning-Oriented Assessment, 2002).

In addition the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper has adopted a poverty alleviation strategy, *Ubudehe* which has a bottom-up approach towards building human capital. *Ubudehe* is a local poverty reduction initiative which invests in community-led programmes aimed at encouraging local farmers and entrepreneurs to be proactive in their economical empowerment by identifying priority investments and activities (MINALOC 2006).

The creation of associations (*ishyirahamwe*) initiated by rural poor is a manifestation of the *Ubudehe* initiative. The 7 *ishyirahamwe* which I researched were connected to the foundation which is a development initiative that supports and facilitates the working activities undertaken by the various *ishyirahamwe*. The foundation was located in a rural poor area that lacked basic social and public services.

**4.2. The people of Rwabutenge**

The people in Rwabutenge referred to the Foundation as *ubwisungane mu Rwanda* which means solidarity in Rwanda and *urugo rwi ishyirahamwe*, which means the home of the *ishyirahamwe*. Others referred to the foundation as *Cerai*, which was the former name of the site before the Foundation was built.
The establishment is in Rwanda’s rural area in the cellule of Runzenze which is in sector of Rwabutenge, the province of Kigali-Ville. As mentioned above my target population lived and worked in the sector of Rwabutenge.

Rwabutenge can be characterized as very poor rural area with general low levels of living manifested in the form of low incomes monetary and non monetary, inadequate housing and poor health. The population at large lack the ability to participate and derive benefit from social and public services such as education, roads, electricity, markets, health services, and water supplies.

The only educational service in the area was a primary school located approximately 3 Km from the foundation. In many cases children had to leave school because parents could not afford the educational expenses. A woman called Clement, who had two children that are enrolled in school, explained the situation as follows:” Our biggest concerns are school fees and health. The fee for having one child in school is 4000 Frw every trimester and in addition we have expenses on books, pencils and school uniform. The children are kicked out of the school if the parents do not have the means to pay the fees”.

Another important issue related to human capital was health. There was one only one medical service in area, located in Gahanga, approximately 4km from the foundation that could only provide basic medical care. The hospitals were located in the urban area where the minority of the population resides.

Rwabutenge was located near a swamp area and the climate condition made people prone to parasitic diseases such as malaria. People in the area were often suffering from recurrent malaria and they were often reluctant to seek medical care since they could not afford it. A man, John, who dissatisfied about the consultation fee said:” The consultation fee at the doctors in Gahanga is100 Frw. It feels frustrating using such amount and finding out nothing or having to pay for expensive medicines which the family can not afford”.

The majority of the members in the 7 ishyirahamwe were not members of the health scheme Mutuelle de sante in Gahanga, because they could not afford the high expenses. A woman called Muteteri that was member of the health scheme explained the cost of the membership:”
The price for membership in Mutelle for 2 adults and 5 children under 18 costs 5000 Frw per year. Children over 18 years of age had to pay 700 Frw per year. The benefits of the health scheme are that the consultation fees are lower and medicines are cheaper.”

Rwabutenge has a scarcity of water which was a regional problem. There was limited access to safe drinking water and sanitation. The majority of the population fetched their water from a nearby river, Nyawarungu. The water was muddy and people often contracted various waterborne diseases. A man, Rugaruka, in his mid 50s explained the rural people’s predicament as follows:” Many of our problems are related to poverty. We drink unsafe drinking water from the river that is polluted by the city folks. Sometimes we see dead dogs floating in the river, but we do not have any other source of drinking water that we can afford”.

The foundation sold drinking water from the cisterns, but unfortunately not everybody could afford it. Rugaruka continued:” The price is too high and if my children get used to drinking that water, how are my going to tell them to drink the Nyawarungu water, when I can not afford the water from the cistern?”

Poor livelihoods were manifested in various ways, f.i. families were unable to satisfy their material needs and could only afford a minimum quantity of food. An old woman, Harerimana, described her experience of poverty in poetic terms:” We know what poverty is; we eat it, sleep in it, wear it and leave it as an inheritance to our children when we die”.

Rwabutenge is in a location which is marginal and isolated in various ways and also in respect to infrastructure. The main road liking the area to Kicukiro centre and the big markets was in an alarming condition.

The only public transports available were a few motorbikes and mini buses, which were in a poor state. The buses did not have fixed times for leaving or coming. They would leave whenever they are full and a passenger would risk waiting for several hours to get to Kicukiro.

The buses would leave from the market place Gahanga. The market was open twice a week, Wednesdays and Saturdays, but it was possible to buy groceries the other days at the small local shops.
Furthermore, Rwabutenge had a subsistence economy and the population were predominately involved in subsistence agriculture on small family farms. The rural economy befitted in many aspects on the foundations presence in the area. One of the central benefits were that a segment of the population were enabled to diversify their livelihoods and go from subsistence farming to making money on crops sales and wage work.

### 4.3 The Foundation

The Major of Kicukiro district allocated the land that the Foundation is build on and the site of the Foundation was built between 2002 and 2004. The site is about 10 hectares and includes six buildings: a small house for administrative services; a middle-sized house for the director of the Foundation to live in, two large buildings for workshops and classrooms; a chicken coop, a stable; a set of toilets, sinks and showers for collective use (Youth, Citizenship and Solidarity Foundation, 2004). The official opening of the Foundation took place in October 2005.

The development intervention is initiated by the Rwandese Youth Citizenship and Solidarity Foundation (*Solidarity Rwandaise*) which is a French and Rwandese NGO that draws support from the “Youth Citizenship and Solidarity Foundation” which is a “*reflection action*” structure conceived by professor José Kagabo. Kagabo is of a Rwandan origin and he one of the initiators of the Foundation. He lives in Paris and he is connected to *Centre d’Études Africaines, École des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales, Paris* (Youth, Citizenship and Solidarity Founadtion, 2004)

The activity program were administered and carried out by the Rwandese Solidarity Foundation which had hired an administrative team to be in charge of the daily management of the Foundation. The administrative team of the Foundation operated from Kigali, while a teacher and a veterinarian were present at the foundation on daily basis. The teacher was responsible of all the practical tasks that were connected to the daily management of the foundation and any questions concerning the foundation’s programs and activities could be directed to her. Meanwhile the veterinarian was responsible for the veterinary services connected to the foundation and of the *ishyiramwe* that were engaged in livestock raring and poultry.
4.4 The ishyirahamwe

The overwhelming majority of the ishyirahamwe members were non-literate. According to NURCs survey the participation of non literate people in public life, is much less than literate: 7 percent compared with 19 percent (NURC, 2004). This shows the great importance of creating development programs that seriously address the non-literate and vulnerable segments of the population such as the one initiated by Kagabo and the Rwandese Solidarity Association. The program encourages and enables non-literate people to participate in income generating activities to improve their standards of living.

Group formation

The foundation’s development initiative can be characterized as I previously mentioned as being coherent to the national Ubudehe poverty reduction programme. This is due to three factors, which clearly show the high degree of bottom-up participation. The first factor is that ishyirahamwe group formation was initiated by the rural people themselves, secondly, the activities were identified by the group members themselves and finally, initially all the 7 ishyirahamwe took initiative to contact the foundation in search of alternative income sources.

The ishyirahamwe members had formed groups by themselves and several members pointed out how and why they had decided to become part of a group. One woman in her 40s from the ishyirahamwe Turwanye Ubukene, Mukamusoni, replayed: “We were called to community meeting and encouraged by the Rwabutenge sector authorities to create a group and vote for a committee. The committee comprise of four individuals; a president, a vice president, a treasurer and a secretary”

Another member, Jean, from the ishyirahamwe Kagarwa, explained the circumstance in which they had made a group as such:” The government encouraged people to start ishyirahamwe on their own. We were several people that cultivated coffee and we decided to make a working group. We registered us at the district and sector level as a group”.

Further a young woman, Odette, from Turwanye icyorezo Sida pointed out her personal reason for wanting to join the group: “After the genocide there were many women headed households that did not have any income generating activities. I was sole breadwinner and I felt that working in as ishyirahamwe was my only opportunity to get out of poverty”.

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The main reasons that people got together in groups seem to be that the authorities had promoted ishyirahamwe as means of poverty reduction. Some of the ishyirahamwe members said that they had joined a group by chance and others said they had joined a group because of the nature of the activities that the ishyirahamwe was engaged in. A man, called Protogene in his late 30s said:” I joined Giramata because all the members were engaged in cattle raring and had cattle. I wanted to learn skills related to genetically enhanced cattle“.

The members of the two ishyirahamwe Giramata and Kagarwa had membership on the basis of the activities. Giramata members were engaged in cattle raring on private and ishyirahamwe level, while the Kagarwa members were cultivating coffee both on ishyirahamwe plot and private.

I have mentioned some of the reasons to why people chose to engage in ishyirahamwe, but I also like to shed some light on why others decided to leave the ishyirahamwe.

**Drop out**

The number of members in each ishyirahamwe varied according to how many members the group could have in order to profit from the activity. Some ishyirahamwe had had frequent drop out such as Turwanye Icyorezo Sida that had started up with 25 members and were reduced to 10 members, Kagarwa that had numbered 52 members that were reduced to 40 members and Korandebe had started up with 46 members and were now 13.

Meanwhile some ishyirahamwe had not experienced any drop outs; Duteraninkunga comprised of 18 members, Turwanye ubukene were 11 members, Dukunde Abamugaye had 21 members and Giramata had 17 members.

The ishyirahamwe that had members that had dropped out gave several reasons to explain the trend. Some attributed the dropout to lack of economical gains. One woman, Mukankusi said: ” Many people have left our group, because we have low economical profit in the ishyirahamwe. People experience that they do not gain anything and they stop showing up”.

Further many people in Rwabutenge virtually lived from hand to mouth and the ishyirahamwe did not guarantee cash payments each day, but rather focused on saving and investment. A
woman, Numugore, in her 40s explained the problem as such:” In the ishyirahamwe we do not get paid on daily basis. The consequence is that many members pull out of the group, to pursue other off-farm jobs that a paid per day in able to buy food for the household”. Other explanations that were given to the causes of drop out were related to health. A woman called Muteteri in her 40s commented;” Some members chose to withdraw from the ishyirahamwe due to poor health. As cultivators we have a heavy workload and when we get ill we can not afford to get proper medical attention. This makes our health deteriorate until we can not get out of bed and work.”

The reasons for dropping out from ishyirahamwe can be summed up in one word; poverty. Vulnerable people in Rwabutenge do not have livelihood conditions that secure basic needs such as adequate food or access to medical care. According a woman called Uwinezma in her early 40s her situation was as follows:” My situation is very desperate and I wake up every morning without knowing how I am going to feed my children in the evening”. This situation was common among the mothers. Some of the mothers would come to ishyirahamwe work and tell me that they had not eaten for days, because they had to save the food for the children.

The comments from the members clearly show that if vulnerable people are to be expected to manage to work in an ishyirahamwe on a regular basis they would have to have fulfilled their basic needs first. Without the basic needs being met the members will continue dropping out in search of other ways to gain cash for food and health.

Apparently many cultivators in Rwabutenge use the survival strategy of pursuing low paid off-farm work based on day to day employment. This kind of coping strategy is a short-term solution to a long lasting problem. In the long run this strategy increases insecurity and is not sustainable. Additionally the strategy of undertaking casual employment prevents the vulnerable drop outs from investing in ishyirahamwe membership that might in a broader time perspective give them opportunities to gain successful adaptive strategies and thus improved livelihood security.

4.5 The assets-access-activities approach

I have organized my research around seven important economical and social factors that determined the ability of the 7 ishyirahamwe to engage in sustainable activities that could
generate investments and enhance the members’ livelihoods. These factors were recognised as:

- The groups’ names,
- The groups’ composition and gender
- The activities that the groups are undertaking,
- Assets ownership of the groups
- The groups access to financial services and social funds,
- The management structure and decision making within the groups and
- The degree of support that the groups receive from the foundation.

The phenomenon *ishyirahamwe* is formed on the basis of economic interests and group solidarity and functions as working units in which people work in, regardless of gender and ethnic background. According to my findings *ishyirahamwe* participation has the potential to contribute to a sustainable and successful livelihood strategy. The success however, depends on three interrelated factors: assets, activities and access.

The *ishyirahamwe* members’ collective assets determines the economical and social status of the particular *ishyirahamwe*, the activities are the tasks in which the group is involved in to generates income and access refers to the group member’s access to the collective resources and decision-making.

Each *ishyirahamwe* had their names, their specific activities, assets and diverse experiences. The members described the names of the group as their identity.

1. The names of the groups

The names that the *ishyirahamwe* members had adopted for their a groups clearly reflects vital social issues that concern the members such as work, solidarity, poverty, hiv/aids, disability and milk. In Rwandan culture milk represents good health and prosperity.
The oldest *ishyirahamwe Korandebe* which means “let me see you work” started up in 1996. *Duteraninkunga* refers to “let us help each other” and the *ishyirahamwe* was made in 1997. *Dukunde Abamugaye* means “let us love the disabled “and was created in 2001. *Turwanye Ubukene* refers to “let us fight poverty “and the *ishyirahamwe* was formed in 2003. *Kagarwa* was created in 2003. *Turwanye Icyorezo Sida* can be translated into “let us fight the pandemic of HIV/AIDS and the members formed the *ishyriahamwe* in 2004. Finally *Giramata* means “may you have milk” and was created in 2005.

2. Group compositions and gender

Out of the 7 *ishyirahamwe*, 3 *ishyirahamwe* comprised of women members solely: *Korandebe, Duteraninkunga* and *Turwanye icyorezo Sida*. 2 *ishyirahamwe* were male dominated: *Giramata and Kagarwa*. While the 2 *ishyirahamwe*: *Turwanye Ubukene* and *Dukunde Abamugaye* had members of both sex.

Looking at all the *ishyirahamwe* it is clear that there are a substantial number of male members, but the majority of the members were woman. Many of the women belong to women headed households and represented the most vulnerable people. Approximately 28 percent of the members of *Duteraninkunga* belonged to women headed households. According to the UN in Rwanda the estimated number of female headed households is approximately 34 percent (Learning-Oriented Assessment, 2002). The foundations development initiative was aimed at improving the lives of the most vulnerable people in the area which were women.

Additionally the *ishyirahamwe* that had the majority of men, *Giramata* and *Kagarwa* seemed to be better off than the rest of the other *ishyirahamwe*. This is due to the fact that the members of *Giramata* and *Kagarwa* had resources prior to joining the *ishyirahamwe*.

Secondly *Giramata* members made a group with the aim of getting capacity building and learn skills related to cattle raring. Unlike the other groups they did not engage in agricultural income generating activities. On the other hand *Kagarwa* members were engaged in cultivation of the cash crop coffee. They came together and a group on the basis of getting access to agricultural extension services. Finally in the *ishyirahamwe* that had both men and
women, there were no gender division of labour. They all undertook the same tasks regardless of sex.

3. Activities

The *ishyirahamwe* members undertook various income generating activities that gave them access to off-farm income, farm income and non-farm income sources. Off-farm income was obtained through agricultural labour payments on the Foundation’s plot. This income source was rare and was only undertaken by *Turwanye Ubuken* that was on contract labour. Farm income was accessed through agricultural work on *ishyirahamwe* plot and the foundations plot. There were only 3 *ishyirahamwe* involved in farm income. The *ishyirahamwe* that had managed to invest in common plots that they cultivated on were *Korandebe* and *Duteraninkunga*. The same two *ishyirahamwe* were engaged in own account farming on the foundations plot. They used the plots for free. While *Kagarwa* was the only *ishyriamwe* that had received two common plots from the sector officials. Additional farm income was obtained through crop sales and livestock ownership. *Korandebe*, *Duteraninkunga* and *Kagarwa* were involved in crop sales. But only *Korandebe* and *Duteraninkunga* had succeeded in investing the crop earnings in livestock.

Finally non-farm income refers to non-agricultural income source such as business. The non-farm category of income was undertaken by *Turwanye Icyorezo Sida* and *Dukunde Abamugaye* that were engaged in the production and sale of handicrafts. *Giramata* was the only *ishyirahamwe* that was not engaged in income generation.

There were some *ishyirahamwe* that had some similar features in regards to activities undertaken by the groups. I have therefore placed the *ishyriahamwe* that had some similarities under the same heading for reasons of analysis.

**Korandebe and Duteraninkunga**

*Korandebe* and *Duteraninkunga* were engaged in cultivation of crops, livestock raring and poultry. The two eldest *ishyirahamwe* had worked on the Foundations plot cultivating crops such as corn, soy, and beans. The members were not paid by the Foundation for cultivation and maintenance of the crops, but for the yields. One woman, Muteteri in her late 40s said:
” Urugo (the Foundation) gave Korandebe a market in which we could sell our produce. We agreed on following prices for the yields cultivated on urugo plot; 1kg soy was sold for 220 Rwandan Francs ( Frw), 1kg maize was sold for 160 Frw and the beans that were sold in buckets or per kg was sold for, 800 Frw for bucket and 200 Frw for 1kg”. According to an elderly woman, Mukarusine, the ishyirahamwe Korandebe had made profits on their crop sales:” We earned approximately 100 000 Frw from selling our yields and a small amount of money was divided among the us”.

Duteraninkunga had got a loan from the Foundation and no other ishyirahamwe had been offered this kind of opportunity. The unequal treatment might cause problems for the Foundation if other the ishyirahamwe asks for the same favour. According to my information the Foundation was not initially suppose to function as a substitute for other financial institutions for the ishyirahamwe members. According to the Ubudehe spirit the ishyirahamwe members were supposed to generate money by their own means to pursue their common goals as a group.

The prices that the Foundation gave for the various crops from the ishyirahamwe were equivalent to the prices on the markets in Gahanga, Bugesera and Kicukiro. A woman called Harerimana, from Duteraninkunga said:” the surplus acquired from the crops sales was used in investing in the collective plot, but we did not have adequate amount of money and had to ask for a group loan. We did not have collateral to borrow cash from the bank, so we borrowed 200 000 Frw from the urugo to buy the plot. We have already paid back 100 000 Frw and in January we will pay back the remaining sum.”

The Duteraninkunga collective plot was bought for 200 080 Frw and was mainly used to grow non food outputs for sale such as trees, French Cameroon grass and a special type of bananas. One woman, Nyiratebuka, explained the crop mix by saying: “On our plot we grow soy, beans, and grass for livestock, bananas and trees. The trees are used for house construction and firewood, while the bananas are specifically used for production of traditional beers. Banana beer is quit profitable and 1 jerry can be sold for 200 Frw. We use approximately 9 banana bundles to produce 20 litres of beer. The beer has a strong traditional value and is often given a way as gift in various ceremonies”
Banana vine gives secure income since it is easy to sell to the various small bars in the area. The fact that Korandebe cultivates mainly non-food crops proves that the members have accomplished a successful adaptive strategy, which makes them less prone to crises such as crop failure. Additionally the members have build up assets by cultivating different types of crops. Further the members have expanded their market by selling their agricultural products to different types of buyers. The soy, beans and grass are being sold to the Foundation, while the trees and the banana vine are being sold directly to other households or the local market in Gahanga or Kicukiro.

The grass that the women in Duteraninkunga cultivated was used as feed for cattle and poultry at the Foundation’s farm. The barn had 6 cows, 4 bulls and 5 calves, and some of them were of the local breed zebu and others genetically enhanced. The poultry comprised of 700 genetically enhanced “highline” chickens.

_Duteraninkunga_ estimated to profit well from the yields on the collective plot. A woman called Ndikubwimana in her late 30s said: “It commented: “We estimate to produce 50kg of soy, 25 kg of beans and a large amount of grass. The Foundation will purchase 1kg of soy for 200 Frw and 1kg of beans for 126 Frw.” The _ishyirahamwe_ is expecting to 10 000 Frw on soy, 3150 Frw on beans plus additional profits on grass and trees.” Unfortunately the members could not expect to profit from the bananas because some of the trees had died due to excessive sun. Additionally the members would also profit from the crops they cultivated on the Foundations farm.

_Korandebe_ invested in a plot which they use for cultivation of soy and grass. The yields were sold to the Foundation. One woman, Odette, explained how they had achieved to buy land: “We invested the money we earned on the crop sales and bought a plot that cost between 100 000 Frw and 150 000 Frw. The yields were sold to the _urugo._”

Korandebe and Duteraninkunga had further invested in goats from the money they earned from cultivating crops on the foundations plot and the _ishyirahamwe_ plot. The areas of investment were decided by the groups themselves and the women pointed out that the most desirable and profitable investment was goat raring.
A. Goat raring

*Korandebe* and *Duteraninkunga* were the two only *ishyirahamwe* that had succeed in buying goats for their members. *Korandebe* had managed to buy goats by means of aid from Oxfam. A woman called Mukarulinda in her early 40s told me the details:”In November 2000 we received aid from an Oxfam project that started up at the district of Kicukiro and targeted women’s groups at cellule level. *Korandebe* received 64 000 Frw and the money was invested in buying 5 goats for 50 000 Frw”.

By contrast *Duteraninkunga* had not received aid, but had succeeded in buying goats by means of crop sells. They invested more money in goats than *Korandebe*. An elderly woman by the name of Mukatambana said:”We bought 10 goats, which cost 100, 000 Frw”. Investing in goats is in Rwabutenge perceived as a vice investment, because goats can easily be translated into money or food in the rural market.

In the beginning *Korandebe* gave 5 members out of 13 goats and in *Duteraninkunga* 10 members out of 18 received goats. The two *ishyirahamwe* did not have resources to buy goats to all the members so they applied a traditional system of goat distribution among the members. A woman called Angelina in her late 30 explained how the goat distribution functioned:”In the beginning five members received goats and as soon as the goats gave birth the off springs were kept and the mother was given away to the next member that did not have a goat. All the members have goats, but three members have lost their small goats. The plan is to provide them with new goats as soon as a goat gives birth. When all the members have goats we are going to sell the mother goat at the market and save the money in the bank.” It is interesting to note that the members invest their money back into their cultural sphere by investing in goats. Further the members have a bond of solidarity through assisting the ones that lost goats in getting new ones.

The *ishyirahamwe* members said that they preferred savings that were held in the form of livestock, rather than in cash. This was due to two reasons, the first reason was the lack of financial markets in the rural area and the second was that goats were easily convertible into other forms of wealth such as cash or consumption. Additionally the members told me that they benefit from goat raring since the activity was not time consuming or expensive and that the waste from the goat was used as manure on their plot.
A woman called Harerimana in her 60s commented on the reason to why the members had chosen to buy goats and not cows as such:” We decided on goat raring, due to two significant factors. The first factor was that a goat is cheaper than a cow and secondly a goat gives more off springs a year than a cow. A goat is pregnant for 5 month and usually has 2 to 3 off springs at the time, while a cow is pregnant for 1 year and has only one off spring at the time”.

I assumed that the goat could provide the owners with milk for consumption, but I was proven wrong when a woman covered her mount with her hand and shock her head vigorously. The woman was called Uwimana and was in her 30s:”No, no, you see drinking goat milk is considered as a cultural taboo” she replayed and all the women laughed.

I did not get a specific answer to why this taboo had been created, but the women replayed that that was the way of culture. After a while the women admitted that there were some occasions that drinking goat milk was accepted when an infant was ill and the mother did not have any other means to give the child nutrition.

Some of the ishyirahamwe that had adequate assets had bought goats which they perceived as a fruitful investment. On the other hand the foundation wanted to broaden the members horizon by giving them new knowledge and an alternative activity to goat raring which was poultry. Unfortunately the poultry activity did not serve the recipients in the intended ways.

B. Poultry

Two ishyirahamwe Korandebe and Duteraninkunga received genetically enhanced chicken from the foundation’s poultry. According to the veterinarian the objective with distributing the chickens among the ishyirahamwe members was to improve the vulnerable people’s livelihood situation in tree ways. First the eggs from the chickens were supposed to give the households better nutrition base ,secondly the surplus eggs were supposed to be sold at the market, thus giving the chicken owners economic profit and finally the owners were supposed to gain capacity and skills learning about poultry.

In September 2005 Korandebe received chickens from the foundation. Each member that had built a hen house received 10 chickens. 54 per cent of the members received 10 chickens
each, 8 percent received 5 chickens each and 38 per cent received none. The members that did not get chickens did not want them or did not have the capacity to build henhouses.

Similarly Duteraninkunga also got chickens. 61 percent of the members had received 10 chickens each, 6 per cent had received 5 chickens each and 33 percent had not got chickens.

According to one of the members that owned chickens, she could not get the chickens to lay eggs. The elderly woman by the name of Mukatambana said:” In July Duteraninkunga received 5 chickens and additional 5 chickens in September. The July chickens gave me 20 eggs for 2 weeks and then the eggs came more and more seldom. Finally in October the eggs stopped coming and I have not had eggs for nearly 2 month. The September chickens gave me 4 eggs per day, but after 3 weeks the eggs stopped coming. Some days I would get an egg or two and other days none. Eggs are very profitable and 1egg can be sold for 50Frw at the market”. The chicken owners had clearly anticipated that the poultry would be profitable and were now disappointed because the whole activity had become a failure.

The chicken owners in Korandebe and Duteraninkunga were not satisfied with the chicken activity that the foundation had introduced to them due to several factors. A woman called Mukandanga in her mid 30s said:” The chickens have been great disappointment to us all, since they do not lay eggs any more and many of them have already died. I was told by the veterinarian that the chickens probably died because they were not getting the right kind of food and that the hygiene in my henhouse was too poor”.

I decide to look closer at the number of chickens that had died in Korandebe and discovered that two members had lost 1 chicken each, one member had lost 4 chickens, one member had lost 5 chickens and two members had lost 3 chickens each. The total number of chicken that had died between the periods of September to November was 17 and the frustrated owners did not know the cause of death. According to calculations six members out of eight that received chickens in Korandebe have lost 17 chickens in total.

Similar problems were encountered by Duteraninkunga. According to the members the period between October to December three members have lost 3 chickens each, four members have lost 2 chickens, and three members have lost 1 chicken each. The total numbers of chickens that have died were 20. Ten members out of twelve members that have received chickens
have lost them due to death. A woman called Mukarutamu in her 40s claimed that she knew the reason why the chickens died:” The chickens that we received are thin and old and can not give us eggs. I am sure that the cause of death was old age”.

All the chicken owners attributed the chickens’ death to old age. Meanwhile the veterinarian contested the chicken owners’ assumption. The Veterinarian explained the death as follows:” the chickens that the women received were not old. I hand picked them myself and gave the women the best in quality. However I think that the conditions that the chickens live in the members’ henhouse are not favourable”.

Both the ishyirahamwe Duteraninkunga and Korandebe has together lost 37 chickens. According to both ishyirahamwe the veterinarian had responded with taking food samples from some of the members and examined them. An elderly woman by the name of Mukatambana admitted that the members had not been given the poultry the right kind of food:” The veterinarian concluded that the tests had shown that food had too low levels of vitamins. This is correct since some of us had been giving the chickens a cheaper mix of food, because we could not afford the normal mix.”

The veterinarian had clearly not followed up the chicken activity to the degree that the owners needed. One woman called Karamaga in her 40s said:" The veterinarian was here before I got the chicken to supervise the chicken house but apart from that he has not been here or at the other members’ homes. We have mentioned our dilemma with the chickens, but have not got any kind of response.”

Apart from the lack of eggs and the high rate of death the chicken owners mentioned other challenges related to the poultry such as travel expenses, time constraints, expensive food mix and lack of follow up by the veterinarian. A woman called Kabanyana in her mid 40s talked about the members constraints as follows:” The issues of food and transport are our main problem. The special food is very expensive and the trip to Remera where we buy the food is costly. Public transport from Gahanga to Remera costs 350 Rwandan Francs (Frw). Total travel expenses are 700 Frw and the total travel time that we spend is approximately 4 hours. Another woman interrupted and complained about the food prices. Another woman by the name of Mukarutamu said:" The food costs 135 Frw for 1kg food mix. I need 5 kg food mixes for 5 chickens that last for 1 week, which costs 675 Frw. 5kg food will last for 3 days if you
feed 10 chickens. The amount of food required for 10 chickens is 10 kg to last for 7 days and costs 1350 Frw. The total amount that we who have 10 chickens have to spend on food mix and travel in a week is approximately 2050 Frw”

The total amount of 2050 Frw that the women gave for travel and chicken food was more than an off farm income wage, which is approximately 400 Frw for per day. I wondered how the women had managed the high expenses up to now. An old woman called Mukamazi told me that they had managed because the hens had been given them eggs in the beginning:" In the beginning we profited on the chickens, because they gave us eggs. 1 egg can be sold for 40 Frw on the market. Now the chickens do not give us eggs and we can not afford the expenses”.

A middle aged woman by the name Mukabutare gave me an idea of how things could have been if the chickens had given eggs on a regular basis:" Assume that I had got an egg from each chicken every day, which makes it 10 eggs. I could have sold the eggs for 40 Frw each and earned 400 Frw a day. In a week I would have made 2800 Frw. All in all I would profit with 750 Frw to put in my pocket and if I have to travel twice a week to buy the food I double the travel expenses and I am left with 50 Frw”

Many of the women said that they had to travel twice a week to Remera, because they could not afford to buy big quantities at one time due to cash shortage. The women seemed were very worried about the unsuccessful chicken activity and asked me for advice. I looked at them and asked if they had a solution. A woman, Mukamana came up to me and replayed that she had a perfect solution to the problem. She said:" We who are chicken owners could go together and higher a driver and a place nearby to store the food. Once a week we could go to the storage and bring our share of the food. The members themselves would be responsible of the storage and engaged one person to be full time responsible. This person could receive wage in cash, eggs or crops from us.”

All the members seem to agree that the idea brilliant, but the problem would probably be to make all the chicken owners agree to pay the amounts for a driver, fuel and chicken food in advance. All the owners would certainly benefit from such a strategy by saving travel time and travel expenses. Another woman called Chantal in her 40s had comments in regard to
solution, she said:” I want to get permission from the Foundation to sell the chickens and use the money to buy something sensible such as a goat”.

I counted the total amount of chicken owners in both Korandebe and Dutereanikungu and found out that they were approximately 20 people. If the 20 members could go together to rent a car and driver they could save travel expenses and time. The money that they use travelling individually could cover the driver and fuel and the 3 hours travel time could be spent on other important activities. Additionally the chicken owners could negotiate with the shop in Remera to give them a good price, since they would buy substantial amount of food in one transaction. Many of the members also felt that they were faced with the problem alone and that the Foundation did not assist them to find a solution. A woman came up with another idea that included the Foundation. A woman called Mukamwezi whom was respected because of her old age said:” I think it would be easier for us if the Foundation and we could come to an agreement about a way that the foundation could assist us to supply a cheaper food mix”.

Surely the technical problems such as transport can easily be solved in this situation, but the biological problems such as the fact that the chickens do not lay eggs must be properly examined by a veterinarian. I have observed that conditions that the 20 chicken owners live in varies a great deal in respect to hygiene; sun light, heat and this can probably affect the chickens’ capacity to lay eggs.

According to the members 37 chickens have died and I think that this calls for a serious examination of external and biological factors that may contribute to sickness and subsequent death among the chickens.

The poultry owners mentioned that they were reluctant to ask for assistance to deal with this problem, so when a chicken got ill they did not inform the foundation or the veterinarian. This might mean that the veterinarian is not aware of if there may be contagious diesis among the chickens that leads to death. It may be a possibility that if the sick chickens were taken out of the group the others could have survived.

Another issue that is related to the chicken food is that the food mix should be examined regularly when it is delivered from the shop in Remera. It could be a possibility that the
problem of the chickens getting ill could be attributed to the shop that sells the food and not the condition that the chickens are exposed to in the member’s homes.

**Turwanye Ubukene**

I will move on to another *ishyiamwe* that is the only one to receive off-farm income source, *Turwanye Ubukene*. *Turwanye Ubukene* was engaged in the clearing of land, digging and plough the foundations plot. The area was going to be used for planting French Cameroon grass, for the foundations cattle and poultry. In Rwanda the cows are zero gracing, due to gracing restrictions and farmers that grace livestock are in danger of getting fined by the authorities.

The land clearing activity was time limited and paid in wage. One woman called Iyamuremye in her late 30s said:” we are wage workers and paid according to a contract. The contract states that we will be paid after we cleared a certain amount of land. The total amount that we will get as a group is 120 000 Frw and we estimate with using two or three month on the clearing. We started the land clearing in October and aim to be finished in the end of December. Normally an agricultural wage worker would earn 400 Frw per day, but getting hired work in the area is difficult and regulated by seasonality.”

The opportunities for off-farm work would be low in November, after the planting period. During the harvesting period the demand for help on other farms would be slightly higher.

*Turwanye Ubukene* had 11 members which means that each member would earn the amount of 10 909 Frw for the work. After the contract the members would not have any other work opportunities at the foundation. During November the group had to ask for payment in advance from the foundation to buy food for their household and they received 60 000 Frw out of the total amount of 120 000 Frw. A woman called Mugenzi in her 40s explained to me why they had asked for an advance, by saying:” Many of us can barely fulfil our obligations to feed our children. You see our daily food consumption had to be found on a day to day basis.”

An old man called Eugene filled in to explain how desperate his situation was, by saying:” I can go for a whole moth without having 100 Frw to spend on the household and no money to buy a dress for my wife.”
The old man tried to explain by the comment that he could go for a long while without having access to work and thus no money in his pocket. Additionally being able to purchase cloth indicates well being, since all the money usually is spent on buying food. Most members of the group had only two pair of clothing, the ones they wore when they were farming and the Sunday clothing that they used in church and in the Gacaca trials on Tuesdays.

Prior to the group’s advance payment, the members had had specific plans about how to invest the wage they were going to earn. One middle aged woman, Hitimana, explained the plan as follows:” We will earn 120 000 Frw and we will take 30 000 Frw and invest in livestock, most likely goats. One goat costs 10 000 Frw and a small calf costs somewhere in between 60 000 and 100 00Frw.Most likely we will buy goats since they are affordable. We will then share a small amount among us and the rest of the cash will go to our collective bank account”.

Clearly goat raring is the most desirable activity among the ishyirahamwe members that are not engaged in cattle raring. Goat is a sign of relative wealth and functions as security for the household. Meanwhile cattle are too expensive and can not be distributed among the members at the same speed as a goat, because a cow only gives birth once a year to one off spring.

Turwanye Ubukene was one of the least resourceful ishyirahamwe, because they did not own land or livestock. According to the group it was a common strategy for ishyriahamwe that did not own land to rent land by private owners. A woman Habiyambere in her 50s said:” We collected 5000 Frw from the members and rented a piece of land. Unfortunately excessive sun resulted in crop failure and we did not earn anything. We were sad since we had used valuable time and resources on the crop that dried out and died. After a while we decided to put together additional 7000 Frw to rent another piece of land and buy seeds. This time we manage to grow the crops, which we shared among the members and we also shared seeds that we used on our private plots”.

The profits were shared among the individual members rather than investing it as group. If the group had soled the yields and saved the money, they would have had the opportunity to do further invest. But as an old man called Pierre protested:” It is not easy to save money when you do not have food on the table.”
The group used the yields to make further investments, not in livestock or cash but in seeds which they further utilised on their private plots to generate new crops.

From my point of view the Turwanye Ubukene members had problems in fulfilling their basic needs, and could therefore not manage to allocate their wages in sustainable investments.

**Turwanye icyorezo Sida and Dukunde Abamugaye**

*Turwanye Icyorezo Sida* and *Dukunde Abamugaye* are the only groups involved in non-farm income which is income that do not arise from agriculture. The two groups are engaged in natural resource based activity which is production traditional handcrafts such as sewing bags, baskets and mats. The handicrafts are made out of raw material gathered from trees that grow by the river bank. Indirectly the members obtain income from the local environment, since they use natural resources in the production. This would move their income source to one of off-farm income, but I still chose to classify their activity under non-farm income since the members are practicing a non farm rural self employment. This activity can clearly be classified under both income sources.

Both groups identify constraints in selling their products. A woman called Nyiramana in her 40s said:” Our *ishyirahamwe* earn marginal income by selling handcrafts that we make. We sell a small bag for 400 Frw and a big for 1000 Frw. The production of a small bag costs us 120 Frw, which means that we earn 380 Frw for a small bag. The money is divided among all the members.”

*Turwanye Icyorezo Sida* comprises of 10 members and if they sell one small bag and share the profits the members would earn 38Frw each and as mentioned above an egg costs 40 Frw. Even if the production of handcrafts among the women was admirable high, the economical returns are very low. The women are lucky if they manage to sell a small bag per day. The enterprise is not sustainable or profitable. Further constraint encountered by both *ishyirahamwe Turwanye icyorezo Sida* and *Dukunde Abamugaye* is that they lack access to market to sell their products. Additionally it seems to me as if members produced handcrafts in order to have something to do rather than to meet the needs of a particular market. A sole breadwinner called Sophia said:” Turwanye icyorezo Sida members do not have anywhere to sell our handcrafts. Usually we stand near by Kicukiro, but since we do not have authorization to sell from the market we are always driven away by the police”. According to new
government regulations people are discouraged from selling products on the streets. Instead, they are forced to rent a place on the market, which is costly for poor rural people.

In addition Turwanye icyorezo Sida was engaged in voluntary community work aimed at assisting people suffering from hiv/aids. One middle aged woman called Donatilla said: “Our main focus is to help people with hiv/aids on a voluntary basis. Sick people do not have the strength to do the daily activities of a household such as farming, collecting firewood and water. Our goal is to help them with these tasks, but it is a challenge to get in touch with people that suffer from hiv/aids. People that have been infected do not want to admit that they are ill, because of the stigma attached to having hiv/aids.” As a consequence of the Genocide of 1994 the hiv/aids prevalence rate is approximately 11.2. The pandemic is the leading cause of mortality for Rwandan adults (Learning-Oriented Assessment, 2002). It is estimated that between 250,000 and 500,000 women were raped during the Genocide (Stensrud and Husby, 2005). In the rural setting there is no accessibility to adequate care for people with hiv/aids and those who are infected tend to hide their situation in fear of stigmatization.

Additionally Turwanye icyorezo Sida members played an educational role in the community. One woman, Fiona, in her late 40s said: “We also do some information work among the population. We talk about the nature of HIV and how to protect against it. Many people are misinformed and ignorant about this disease and we try to give them adequate information. In our culture a woman can not request a man to use condom. So we try to inform men also about the importance of using condoms to protect themselves and their partner from HIV”.

According to my informants in the Rwandan tradition practice a woman do not command control over her own body and she can therefore not request that her husband to use condom. Condoms were available for free at the medical centre in Gahanga, but many people were reluctant to use condom. The reluctance was not due to ignorance as the women told me, but due to religious beliefs. The women further explained to me that many of the rural people are Protestants and the religion prohibits the use of condoms.

Dukunde Abamugaye did not seem to be as actively engaged in selling or marketing their produce as Turwanye icyorezo Sida. The members Dukunde Abamugaye were disabled and they were mainly preoccupied with addressing issues related to being disabled in contemporary Rwanda. A disabled man called Rugaruka explained the situation as follows:” the situation for disabled people in Rwanda is alarming. No one care and we are hidden away
from public. We are marginalized and stigmatized and we do not have a follow up programs that serve our interests. That is the reason why we got together in ishyirahamwe. We want to be visible and learn skills that can give us opportunity to do income generating activities. You see the government do not give the disabled social support such as money to cover for basic needs and we depend solely on friends and family to survive”. As a consequence of the Genocide many people became disabled either during or after the genocide. Many of the disabled are illiterate and it is therefore difficult for them to make a living by their own means.

The two groups’ enterprise is clearly not profitable and does not generate sustainable long-term employment. The Turwanye icyorezo Sida and Dukunde Abamugaye members are forced to relay on occasional sales of their products. The lack of access to wage earnings inhibits the members to be able to invest in land for crop production either by buying or renting. And even if the members were in a situation where they could access money to rent a plot the availability of land for rent is marginal in the area and so are the off-farm working opportunities. Furthermore, the majority of Dukunde Abamugaye members are severely disabled and off-farm work would not be an option because they can not manage to do physically demanding tasks.

Both ishyirahamwe are in a disadvantaged position, since they do not have goods that attract the rural market such as crops or livestock. Finally the challenge for the groups is to find an urban or international market for their products which is difficult since traditional handcrafts market is characterised by low demand.

Kagarwa and Giramata

The two remaining ishyirahamwe are dominated by men and they are involved in activities that traditionally belong in the male sphere, specialization in cultivation of coffee crops and cattle raring. The two ishyirahamwe has access to extension services, Kagarwa has an agronomist and Giramata has a veterinarian. The agricultural extension agent is provided by the Rwandan coffee cooperation (OCIR), while the veterinarian is provided by the Foundation.
Kagarwa is the only ishyirahamwe that have been given two plots to grow coffee from the sector office in Rwabutenge. One plot is situated in Runzenze and the other plot is in Nyakuguma. All the members were engaged in cultivation of coffee on private plots prior to joining an ishyirahamwe. A man explained why he had chosen to cultivate the cash crop coffee. An elderly man called Jean Claude said:” Coffee is very profitable and I sell 1kg for 650 Rwandan Francs (Frw).The activity is not time consuming, but it requires specific skills to keep the trees alive.”

The farmers mentioned that they did not only benefit economically, but also in regard to knowledge and skills. The members were grateful and satisfied with getting the opportunity to learn more about coffee production skills from the agronomist. One old woman, Clementine explained the skills the members had acquired as follows:” We have been taught harvesting techniques related to how to cut the coffee trees when we harvest them and us also learnt various farming techniques such as which pesticides to use and how to apply them. Additionally we have been given advice on how to process the coffee beans.”

As mentioned earlier Coffee is Rwanda’s main foreign exchange base and it is of the countries interest that as many farmers as possible cultivate the valuable cash crop. Kagarwa members perceived skills and knowledge as important, not only because they could apply the knowledge on their private plots, but also that they could pass the information regarding soil fertility to other farmers in the community.

Many of the cultivators told me that there were two reasons to why they had gone together as a group; one was because as individuals they had received a lower market price for the coffee and the second reason was that they could sell their coffee directly to the buyer. One man called Jean Paul in his 50s said:” It is good to be in ishyirahamwe because as a group we can avoid paying a middle man to sell the coffee for us. Now the coffee cooperation buys coffee directly from us at a good prize. I have estimated that we save approximately 300 000 Frw that would have been paid in expenses for a middle man. As a group we have also managed to get access to better market price, the guaranteed coffee price was raised from 500 Frw per kg coffee to 650 Frw per kg coffee.”

The coffee cultivators mentioned two common challenges which they faced related to pesticides and lack of space to cultivate edible crops. One young man, Sylvestre said:” The
expenses for pesticides and medicines used on the coffee trees are very high. Some of the members have to borrow the pump used for spreading the pesticides, since we can not afford to buy one.” An old woman called Berthe interrupted and complained:” I can not use the plot I cultivated coffee on for other consumption crops, since each coffee tree must be planted with a distance of 2m from each other and the agronomist told us that mixing crops would be bad for the soil and the coffee seedlings.”

Finally Giramata was involved in cattle raring and all the members had private owned cows. A young man called Ntwarabakiga told me about the incentives for starting in this particular ishyirahamwe.” The foundation has genetically enhanced cows and bulls and the members will borrow a bull for breeding. The idea is that our Rwandan cows are going to mix with the genetically enhanced bulls to create a mixed breed of calves. The advantage is that mixed cows produce far more milk than a pure Rwandese cow and they have higher market value.” Further the genetically enhanced bull would be passed among the members until all the members had genetically enhanced cows.

Apart from receiving a bull, the cattle owners were promised access to a veterinarian. One middle aged man, Nkusi said:” The foundation has given us access to a veterinarian who will give us advice, knowledge and skills related to genetically enhanced cattle. I was informed that the group is going to specifically learn modern skills about cow birth, medication and feed. We will also receive training about how to build barns.”

An elderly man, Erik told me how he profits from milk sales as follows:” Two local cows would give 7 litres of milk per day and 3 litres would be fed to the calves. The surplus milk of 4 litres can be sold or consumed by the household. In Kicukiro 1 litre of milk can be sold for 200 Frw and the profit is 800 Frw per day. A genetically enhanced cow would raise the profits by giving far more milk than a Rwandese Zebu cow. The group told me they anticipated to profit from the milk production of the genetically enhanced cows and that the surplus would increase the household income

In rural Rwanda, unlike the goat, a cow is not as easily sold because it is too expensive for the rural market. One man, Nkhusi said:’” The market for selling cows in Gahanga is not good. Cattle are expensive and people can not afford it. The price for a small Rwandan cow is...
approximately 80 000 Frw to 100 000Frw, accordingly a pure genetically enhanced cow cost between 250 000 Frw and 600 000 Frw.”

In Rwanda cows are zero grazing and the owner has to ensure that he or she has land to grow grass. The grass has to be planted and harvested in the right time so the livestock do not suffer from hunger. The survival strategy for cattle owners that do not have adequate access grass to feed the cows is to do illegal gracing. Usually a cattle herder takes the cows to graze on communal pasture land in the morning and comes back in the evening. If the authorities discover this illegal activity, the cattle can be confiscated and the owner has to pay a high fee to get the cattle back.

An informant commented that cattle ownership in Rwandan context is a sign of wealth and prosperity. I decided not to disregard the comment and based on my personal observations and home visits undertaken to some of the member’s household, I concluded that many of the Giramata members could be characterized as relatively resourceful and privileged. An additional and significant indicator of wealth was that the Giramata members did not plan to use their groups’ savings for basic needs, but rather for enhancing their cattle’s health. Nevertheless, I do not wish to generalise and assume that the label “relatively resourceful” includes the entire ishyirahamwe since I did not visit all the members nor did get the opportunity to ask them about their personal wealth.

### 4.6 Assets ownership

I have according to Ellis (2000) divided the assets into the categories of human capital, natural capital, social capital, physical capital and financial capital. The financial capital is placed under savings and loans and the other capitals are placed under asset ownership.

**A. Human capital**

The most important assets possessed by the poor people are their labour and health. People in the area worked 6 days a week from early morning to late evening. They would go from ishyirahamwe working tasks and go to work on their privet plots. Many members stated that
due to demanding and hard work they would often get ill and be forced to stay at home. Illness was given as the primary cause for not attending to ishyirahamwe work. One woman, Mukarutare explained the situation as follows:” It is acceptable that members do not come when they are sick, but if the members do not show up without having a good reason they have to pay a penalty fee of 400 Frw to the group. The money is utilised to higher an additional worker. Usually the sick member sends family members to help out in the ishyirahamwe while they are sick.” All the 7 ishyirahamwe has the same system of taking penalty fee from members that did not come to work.

Human capital was further increased through ishyirahamwe by skills and capacity learning organised by the foundation. The foundation has facilitated a veterinarian to teach the members of Giramata breeding methods related to genetically enhanced cows. Meanwhile the ishyirahamwe that were engaged in cultivation of crops were given training in modern farming techniques with the use of selected seeds.

B. Natural capital

The majority of the ishyirahamwe did not have land to cultivate, due to two main reasons. The first reason was lack of cash to take up a leasing contract and the second reason was the little availability of land in the area. Collective Land ownership seemed to play a crucial role in regards to the sustainability and productivity of the ishyirahamwe. A woman, Mukarubuga from Turwanye icyorezo Sida commented:” We can not manage to get adequate income in our ishyirahamwe because we lack access to land and thus the opportunity to profit on crops sales”.

There were only three ishyirahamwe that had access to and owned land: Duteraninkunga, Korandebe and Kagarwa. Duteraninkunga and Korandebe which were the two oldest ishyirahamwe had open access to cultivate on the foundations plot. A woman called Chantal in her 30s commented:” We sell the yields to the foundation, but we do not get paid for cultivation”. Korandebe bought a collective plot by the means provided by crops sales, while Duteraninkunga had received a loan from the foundation in able to invest in land. The two collective plots cost between 150 000 Frw and 200 000 Frw. Kagarwa on the other hand had been fortunate and received 2 plots from the Rwabutenge sector office.
My findings show that the *ishyirahamwe* that had access to land also had access to cultivate crops for sale. The surplus from the sales was used to invest in goats and other savings. Meanwhile those groups that did not have land lacked the opportunity to accumulated cash for further investments.

*Turwanye ubukene* is one of the *ishyirahamwe* that does not have access to land and a woman called Mukamusoni in her 40s explained the group’s problems as follows:” Our group had planned to buy land or goats for our money. Unfortunately we were forced to ask for advance payments and when we receive our wage in December we will have to use the rest of the money to buy food”. The *ishyirahamwe* members do not have a sustainable activity, because they do not produce for future returns. They work on contract wage and since they are not paid on daily basis they risk to go without money for a long while and finally when the wage comes they are forced to use the money on subsistence. Additionally the group’s ability to plan ahead is curtailed because they do not have a stable income from crops sales or livestock to relay on.

A similar problem is also faced by *Turwanye icyorezo Sida* that do not have the opportunity to own or lease land and thus depend on an unstable day to day income source such as sell of traditional handcrafts. Ownership of land represents stabile income and the opportunity to translate the yields into more land or livestock. Further, livestock ownership is associated with livelihood security.

Access to land in the sector of Rwabutenge could be accomplished in two ways, either by renting or buying land. Rwanda can be characterised as a country with land scarcity and only nine out of ten households have access to agricultural land, the size of their holdings rages an average of 0.55 hectares for the most poor and 1.18 hectors for those who are relatively “well off” (McNairn 2004).

The *ishyriamwe Turwanye Ubukene, Duteraninkunga, Turwanye icyorezo Sida* and *Kagarwa* had at one point in time rented land. The rental prizes ranged from 2000 Frw to 7000Frw, according to the size of the plot and availability of land. The practice of land tenancy was a common practice in the area and the usual reason for renting land given by the 4 *ishyirahamwe* was the lack of resources to buy collective land.
The members further stated why they had abandoned the practice of land tenancy: *Turwanye Ubukene* had stopped due to two factors which were continuous crop failure due to excessive sun and shortage of cash. *Duteraninkunga* had stopped renting because the group bought land and *Kagarwa* gave up their rental contract because they received land from the sector office, while *Turwanye icyorezo Sida* was forced to stop the tenancy, because the land owner had claimed his plot back.

Land tenancy can be regarded as a rural adaptive strategy that gives the *ishyirahamwe* members the opportunity to move from subsistence farming to agricultural wage earnings. The *ishyirahamwe* members rent land to be able to cultivate crops for sale and thus build up assets. The collective assets comprise of the crops and the cash obtained from sales of crops. Depending on the economical status of the specific *ishyirahamwe* the assets are either utilised for consumption (each members gets cash and buys food for the household) or for investment (the group buys land and /or livestock).

C. Social capital

The *ishyirahamwe* represented social capital for the members and the membership gave the individuals certain claims that they could draw on by virtue of their belonging to the group. Some of the social relations among the members were based on reciprocity. An elderly woman called Clementine from Kagarwa described how this relationship was manifested as follows: "The *ishyirahamwe* members also help each other to work on our private plots. We go together and help the other member to dig holes for the seedlings, planting or clearing land. All the members receive and give help and it can be regarded as a traditional gesture of reciprocity. Prior to the genocide people used to ask neighbours and friends to help them with land clearing and harvest. The ones that received help would buy beer and offer it to the helpers. This traditional reciprocity was actually the original *Ubudehe*. Today people are poor and can not afford to buy the beer and the tradition has faded away."

Another woman called Mahundaza from *Duteraninkunga* pointed on another type of relation created within the group as follows: “With the *ishyirahamwe* one does not feel alone. After the genocide many of us women lost our families and husbands. We meet and talk about our experiences and share thoughts, trust and friendship.” The *ishyirahamwe* is an important
instrument in the ongoing reconciliation process in the country. Within the ishyirahamwe domain the women are able to share their personal experiences, heal their pain and create a dialogue of peace with women from both ethnical groups.

Additionally some of the Korandebe members mentioned instrumental aspects of organizing as a social entity. One middle aged woman, Mukamazi said: ”Our ishyirahamwe has 6 woman headed households and getting income generating opportunities for women in the area is not easy. The ishyirahamwe has given us access to resources such as land and livestock and the opportunity to earn income to support our families.”

The ishyirahamwe social organization functioned as means to get access to tangible and non tangible resources. The non tangible resources such as claims, reciprocity and the feeling of belonging seemed to contribute to an enhanced self-esteem and a mental well being for the majority of the members.

For many of the members ishyirahamwe had become their most important social network from which they not only could derive economic support, but also friendship and trust. Many women specifically mentioned that they had experienced deep psychological trauma after the genocide and that the other ishyirahamwe members had help them to cope with their pain and problems. One woman, Mugenzi that had lost her entire family during the genocide explained the social bonds in the group as follows:” During the genocide many of us lost our loved ones and we had no one to talk to about the sorrow in our hearts. In our group we can share experiences and thoughts and comfort each other.”

Meanwhile, the importance of the tangible resources such as access to land, livestock and savings can not be underestimated. The material resources were crucial and contributed to give some of the ishyirahamwe the opportunity to fulfil their basic needs and livelihood security.

D. Physical capital

The ishyirahamwe Korandebe, Duteraninkunga, Turwanye Ubukene and Kagarwa cultivated with traditional farming equipment such as axes and hoes, which was provided by the foundation. A woman called Ndikubwimana in her late 30s said: “We are responsible for the
farming equipments from urugo and we have the opportunity to take them with us home and use them on our private plots.” The opportunity to have access to farming equipment seems to help the ishyirahamwe members very much. Many of the members were too poor to buy equipments by their own means and some of the women claimed that they would not have been able to participate in income generating activities unless they were provided the tools. Additionally the ishyirahamwe Kagarwa needed special types of tools to dig holes for the coffee seedlings, but the tools were expensive. The Foundation had promised assist the members by providing some of the tools.

4.7 The group’s access to financial services, substitutes and social funds

A. Bank accounts

In Rwanda there is a general distrust of financial services among the rural population, which is due to three factors. One is that the financial services are located in the urban areas and are therefore not spatially or economical accessible for the rural population. In addition opening a bank account requires 2500 Frw as deposit, which is a substantial amount for poor people. Secondly people are not familiar or comfortable with saving their money in a bank. Thirdly the rural economy is not solely based on monetary incomes. Rural savings and income was often held in other forms such as in livestock and crops that could be converted into money or consumption goods. As a strategy to promote the access to poor people to financial institutions and services the ishyirahamwe members were encouraged to open bank accounts by the foundation. All the ishyirahamwe, apart from Kagarwa, Giramata and Dukunde Abamugaye had achieved to open a collective account.

The ishyirahamwe Giramata confirmed that they were soon going to open accounts and that the delay was due to that the groups had newly started up. Kagarwa on the other hand gave an impression of that they were not interested in opening an account. One man called Rugaruka in his late 50s commented:” We have not opened a bank account, because we have not got enough money”. Meanwhile Dukunde Abamugaye did not give any reason to why they had not opened an account.
The amount of money put into the bank by the 4 ishyirahamwe ranged from 8500Frw as the lowest amount of savings to 38 000 Frw as the highest amount savings. Turwanye Ubukene had 8500 Frw acquired through off farm work in the bank and one woman called Mugenzi identified what the group wanted to do with the savings as follows:” Our future plan with the money we have saved is to take up a loan from the bank and invest in a plot for the group. The challenge is that we will have to have 200 000 Frw in the bank before we can take up a loan of 100 000Frw. The land will be collateral in case of emergency and also act as security. Renting a plot is very expensive.” The ishyirahamwe Turwanye Ubukene wanted to invest in the ownership of land, rather than using money on leasing expensive land. There is an element of risk in leasing land, because if the crops die the group would still have to pay the lease. Additionally the members demonstrate that they have substantial knowledge of the financial services and that they are actively planning to use these services in the future. The amount of money required by the bank for the ishyirahamwe to take up a loan is high and this is probably the reason why Duteraninkunga decided to take up a loan from the Foundation, rather than the bank.

Korandebe which was an enterprising and prosperous ishyirahamwe seem from my point of view to have placed a relatively low amount of money in their account. A woman called Bihabanye in her late 30s explained to me that a substantial amount of money had been invested. She said:” We have only 38 000 Frw left on our bank account because we have taken out 100,203 Frw to invest in beans that we have put in storage. The beans are going to be sold on the market in the seeding period in October, November and December when the farmers are waiting for the crops to grow. We are at a later time going to invest in a barn for our ishyirahamwe livestock.”

Turwanye Icyorezo Sida had according to a member recently opened up an account. A woman called Solange in her early 40s said:” We have opened a bank account in the Agasekke bank in Kicukiro. We have 17 500 Frw on the account. The money was earned from the sell of handicrafts and off farm farming. ”Turwanye Icyorezo Sida members which had portrayed themselves as having marginal resources had to my surprise a substantial high amount of resources in the bank and such an amount certainly allows the group to lease land for agriculture. The group would probably have to lease land outside Rwabutenge, due to lack of available land for lease in the area.
Turwanye Ubukene with 8500 Frw in savings had proven that they had the ability to save money although they had claimed that the group’s poor livelihoods conditions did not give room for investments.

Further finding were that it was a paradox that the two most resourceful ishyirahamwe, Giramata and Kagarwa had not got a bank account. My assumptions were that some of the members had access to private bank accounts and did not see the need to open a collective account.

Unlike the ishyirahamwe that engaged in income generating activities Giramata as a group was not going to invest in the resources gained from ishyirahamwe efforts, because their goal was to benefit from the knowledge and skills learning provided by the Foundation.

B. Social funds

All the ishyirahamwe had a social or emergency fund called isanduka, which the members could access interest free loans to respond to crisis they face. The members were stimulated to save twice or ones a month. Isanduka refers to the suitcase in which the money is kept and it is known as a traditional Rwandan way of saving. The amount of savings in the isanduka collected from the members of the ishyirahamwe ranged from 10 000 Frw as the lowest amount of savings to the highest amount of savings which was 400 000Frw.

Duteraninkunga and Turwanye Ubukene had adopted an additional saving strategy, ikimina. Ikimina resembles Tontine’s lending methodology and according to an elderly woman called Mukamana functions as follows:” We have also created a money lending scheme called ikimina . The ikimina is a have a collective pot in which we gather money and give it to one or two members at a time. The pot rotates until all the members have received the money in the pot.”

According to a man called Eugene in Turwanye Ubukene the group had an exact amount that rotated among the members. He commented:” We gather 1000 Frw in the ikimina and give the money to one member at the time“.

All the 7 ishyirahamwe mentioned common causes for taking up loans from the isanduka and those were: to pay school fees, medical care, funeral and wedding ceremonies, food, house
repair and crop failure. Duteraninkunga had saved 10 000 Frw in isanduka. One woman called Mahundaza said:” the money is for emergency situations such as illness and school fees. The members can borrow an amount and we agree when the money is going to be paid back. All the members give 50 Frw for savings twice a month.”

Korandebe did not exactly know the amount of money they had in the isanduka, but a woman called Bihabanye gave an estimate:” Every member contributes with 100 Frw to the isanduka once a month which means that we manage to save 1300 Frw every month. We can take up a loan up to 10 000 Frw or more if the money is available in the isanduka .The money functions as insurance and we can access it in bad and good times.”

Several members that had taken up loan mentioned why they had to borrow money from the isanduka. One woman called Josephine in her late 30s:” My child was told that she would have to leave school if I did not pay school fees. I had no where else to turn except for the ishyirahamwe. The same day I received money to pay for my daughters school expenses”. Another woman, Mukamazi told me her predicament:” My child was very sick and I understood that he did not suffer from malaria but from a sever illness. I was afraid and I could not afford to seek medical attention. The ishyirahamwe gave me a loan from isanduka to seek medical care for my child.”

A young woman, Odette, interrupted, eager to tell about her personal experience:” When one of my relatives died I did not have money to cover the funeral ceremony, so I was forced to take up a loan”.

Others had taken up loans related to positive occasions in life such as marriage. A woman called Uwizeye in her 30s:” I had to take up loan to cover some expenses from a wedding ceremony. Getting married is very expensive especially when one does not have relatives that can help paying out with the expenses.” The isanduka social fund plays an important role as safety net for all the members. I noticed that nobody mentioned taken up a loan to buy food, which implies that the members apply a different source for getting food supply in times of food shortage in the household. The majority of all the members of the 7 ishyirahamwe, except for Giramata and Kagarwa had taken a loan from isanduka related to human capital.
Dukunde Abamugaye was the ishyirahamwe that had collected and saved the highest amount of money in the isanduka. A middle aged man called Hakizimana commented:” We have saved 400 400 Frw and all the members give 100 Frw to the isanduka each month. We can not move from place to place without transport, so naturally we have to spend the money for transportation and medical expenses”.

Giramata and Kagarwa were the only ishyirahamwe that did not use the isanduka savings as emergency fund and where the members paid higher savings amounts. A young man called Munyambuga said proudly that although the ishyirahamwe had newly started up they had saved some money:” Each member saves 500 Frw twice a month and up to now we have saved 8000 Frw. The money is going to be spent on pharmaceuticals for the genetically enhanced cattle.”

Kagarwa had spent most of their savings on coffee seedlings. One man, Nkusi, explained that due to the high costs of cultivating coffee, each member had higher saving amount. He said:” All of us save between 100 Frw to 500 Frw twice a month and we have now saved 35 400 Frw. We have spent 25 000 Frw of the savings on buying seedlings and have left 10 400 Frw”.

Turwanye Ubukene did not specify their savings amount, but a woman Mukamusoni commented on the importance of the saving scheme as follows:” I have borrowed money from isanduka several times and it is the only source that I have to access money in hard times. It feels good to have the some form of security”.

Turwanye icyorezo Sida had managed to save money and a woman called Nyiramana expressed her pride and gratitude by saying:” Each member contributes with 100 Frw every month and we have saved 13000 Frw. All of us have at one point in time taken out loans from the isanduka and it has been a great help for us. I do not know where I would have been without isanduka”.

Clearly the isanduka savings and loan plays a crucial role in enhancing women’s social status and empowerment. Through saving schemes such as isanduka and ikimina women are given the opportunity to obtain loans and thus being capable of protecting their families through providing livelihood security and reducing vulnerability. Women are among other things able
to afford medical attention, pay school fees, pay for ceremonies and provide food for their children.

**Aid assistance**

The Rwandan GoR has strongly resisted to give direct aid to the poor segment of the population and instead insisted on the *Ubudehe* principle that encourages the poor to be active and participative in their development.

Many people said that they had gone into *ishyirahamwe* hoping to get aid, but very few *ishyirahamwe* are fortunate and get this kind of assistance. Among the 7 *ishyirahamwe* only two had received aid, *Korandebe* and *Dukunde Abamugaye*. One woman, Claudine in her 30s in *Korandebe* explained the circumstance as follows:” In November 2000 we received aid from an Oxfam project that started up at the district of Kicukiro and targeted women’s groups at cellule level. The *ishyirahamwe* received 64 000 Frw and the cash was invested in buying 5 goats for 50 000 Frw.”

Meanwhile *Dukunde Abamugaye* had not received monetary aid. A man called Rugaruka said:” There is an organization that has donated 18 weel chairs to the disabled in Rwabutenge. The problem is that the chairs are at the sector office and we have to pay 2000 Frw to get a chair.7 people have managed to get aid to pay for the chairs and the remaining weal chairs are still placed at the sector.” This clearly illustrates the situation which disabled people face in Rwanda and in Africa in general. Their livelihood are often characterized by sever poverty and marginalization. Disabled people’s priority and needs are not met. This segment of the population is usually voiceless and therefore excluded from participating in decision making both at community and national level.

**4.8 Management structure and decision-making**

The management structure was the same in all *ishyirahamwe* and was composed of a committee with a president, a vice president, a secretary and a treasurer.

A president told me what role she had in the *ishyirahamwe:*” I am elected by the members and my responsibilities are to give advice to the members about different issues, pass information
and help to solve problems that the members might have. I am the link between the members and the foundation and the sector authorities. I bring issues and questions that the members have to the authorities. I am responsible for information dissemination among the members”.

Further a vice-president explained his role:” I function as a stand in for the president, when she is not present. I also assist and support her with various tasks.” Finally a secretary and treasure rounded up by telling their responsibilities in the committee. Secretary said:” My task is to take notes for the group and take care of important papers”. Treasurer said:” I am responsible of handling all monetary transactions and taking care of the isanduka.”

All the committee members could to a certain degree read and write. Further the committee represented the group in community and district meetings. According to the members information dissemination within the ishyirahamwe committee and the rest of the group was effective and good. All the ishyirahamwe claimed that they had an egalitarian leader structure but according to my observation some of the male dominated ishyirahamwe seem to have an authoritative structure, where the president exercised a substantial amount of power.

Further, decisions were according to a woman called Uwimana taken as follows:” The decision making process is inclusive and all members and all the members have the opportunity to say what they want. We usually vote if we can not reach an agreement. The committee usually makes an evaluation of the problem and comes up with suitable alternatives that they present to the group. If external advice is required for we go to the urugo for ideas. But we as a group are the ones that make the decisions”.

Additionally conflict within the group was usually resolved by the committee and the members. Unfortunately I did not get a research in-depth on the ishyirahamwe structure and how the members perceive and benefit from this kind of structural arrangement. This is because I did not get the opportunity to join the ishyirahamwe group meetings, since the groups seldom had meetings or the opportunity to experience conflict among the members. As an outsider looking at a group it is not always easy to tell the difference between how things actually are and how the members wish things were. This implies that some members would unconsciously give me answerers based on how they wish things were.
4.9 Support from the Foundation

The degree of success of *ishyirahamwe* do not solely depended on tangible assets but also on the relationship that the group has to the foundation. Although all 7 *ishyirahamwe* were connected to the Foundation, some of the *ishyirahamwe* received substantial support from the Foundation, while other did not receive anything. According to my findings the *ishyirahamwe* that got most support where the 2 oldest *ishyirahamwe*, *Duteraninkunga* and *Korandebe*, while the other *ishyirahamwe* experienced that they received marginal help.

I further found a positive connection between support from the Foundation and promising achievements by the *ishyirahamwe*. This is due to the fact that the *ishyirahamwe* that had received support had managed to accumulate wealth through asset ownership. Meanwhile the *ishyirahamwe* that did not receive assistance did not have minimal base of resources that could enable them to generate surplus.

The *ishyirahamwe Duteraninkunga* and *Korandebe* were supported by the foundation in various ways. A woman called Nirere in her 30s said:” The *urugo* (Foundation) provided us with access to land, farming equipments, poultry and various seeds to plant soy, beans, and maize. The *urugo* functions as a market for us, because it buys our agricultural products”. Another elderly woman by the name, Nyirahabimana further explained how they had afforded the collective plot as follows:” *urugo* has also lent us money to buy our own plot.”

5 The Rwabutenge experience and the national gender policy.

The legislation reforms law of Matrimonial Regimes, Succession and Liberties relating to women’s right to inheritance, landownership, property rights has according to my findings had a substantial impact on some of the rural people engaged in *ishyirahamwe* in Rwabutenge. The women from *ishyirahamwe* enjoyed and exercised the ability to own land, livestock, bank account and savings. The *ishyirahamwe* seemed as an instrument to bridge the gender gap by facilitating an enabling environment for women’s empowerment.

During my research I discovered negative impacts of the gender policy on grass root level. Women that took part in productive *ishyirahamwe* work were also forced to undertake
reproductive work in the household. This resulted in an increased workload for the women. Clearly gender roles have undergone changes but the gender relation remains the same. Rwandan men do not assist in the household and women find it difficult to ask her husband for help. The resistance towards men undertaking traditionally women tasks is prevalent, not only among men, but also among women. For example, a man that cooks in his own home is regarded as greedy. Another related example is that a man that fetches firewood and water would risk loose his masculinity and people would laugh and mock him. If gender equality is going to be achieved in Rwanda, gender policies need to target men, not only women. Men’s attitudes and practices need to be put under critical light and addressed through sensitization programs and laws on grass root level.

6 Conclusion

In Rwanda poverty and gender are closely linked together. Gender relations refer to the socially constructed roles and relationship between women and men (Ellis, 2000) these roles are usually unequal in terms of ownership of resources, decision-making, inheritance right, duties and power. In the rural Rwandan context due to the inequality between men and women, women are disadvantaged in respect to assets ownership and control over resources. Women therefore represent the most vulnerable segment of the population, because they are less likely to own and inherit resources. In the aftermath of the genocide the majority of the population was women. The GoR addressed the situation by mainstreamed gender into numerous policies and legislation to enhance women’s empowerment and income generating opportunities. The empowerment and access to decision-making was supposed to be enhanced through the decentralization structure and policy which was going to enabled the rural poor men and predominately women to participate in decision-making and development from the lowest cellule level. The same structure regulates the national poverty reduction initiative Ubudehe and the resources are allocated from the GoR and the donors. The GoR encouraged the formation of groups among the population to fight poverty and marginalization. The aim was two folded: first that the people would participate in their own development, by identifying their context specific problems and find possible solutions to solve them. Secondly the interaction and cooperation would create an enabling environment for reconciliation and gender equity among the rural people.
My research suggests that national poverty alleviation policies and the gender policies have to a degree achieved to create an enabling environment for men and predominantly women to participate in income generating activities, command assets and improve their livelihoods both economically and socially. In my specific case the Foundation were the providers and initiators to the development program in Rwabutenge, but the government had also assisted in providing resources to 1 of the 7 ishyirahame connected to the Foundation. The ishyirahamwe Kagarwa had received land and extension services from the community development program (the sector office). While the other 6 ishyirahamwe had received assistance from the Foundation by different means and to a varying degree. I found a positive connection between getting assistance from the Foundation and enhanced economical status of an ishyirahamwe. Korandebe and Duteraninkunga which comprised of women only had been given most assistant. The Foundation had given the women in Korandebe and Duteraninkunga access to land, agricultural equipments, enhanced seeds, poultry and market through buying their agricultural products. Additionally Duteraninkunga had been given a loan to buy land. These two groups were successful and had managed to accumulate money to invest in collective land and livestock. The groups had advanced from cultivation for subsistence to cultivation for sale and had thus overcome the state of vulnerability. Additionally they had managed to expand their market by not only selling crops to the Foundation, but also to the local markets in Gahanga and Kicukiro. The members invested some of the money within their cultural sphere by investing in goats. Since the ishyirahamwe could not afford buying goats to all the members the goats were distributed among the members in a reciprocal manner.

Ishyirahamwe was also an organization that enabled specialization by the means of skills and capacity building. The members of the male dominated ishyirahamwe Kagarwa and Giramata seemed more resourceful than the members of the other 5 ishyirahamwe. They specialized in coffee production and received knowledge and skills by an agronomist provided by the GoR. While Giramata had the opportunities to engage in cattle breeding of genetically enhanced cattle. The enhanced bull that was provided for breeding belonged to the Foundation. Skills learning for the group were undertaken by the Foundations veterinarian. Evidently the members of the two groups were resourceful prior to joining an ishyirahamwe. The two ishyirahamwe were given opportunities to engage in other marketing activities that were sustainable. Since the genetically enhanced cows give a higher amount of milk, the Giramata members would have the capability to engage in the selling of livestock product. Meanwhile
Kagarwa would get involved in the sale of coffee. This might support my assumptions that among the rural poor people men are more privileged than women and have therefore more access to get assistance from the GoR. Even if the GoR has adopted gender polices and legislations to support women, the gender asymmetries are prevalent and many women’s groups fail to get access to assistance from the GoR because they do not know how to address the right institutions and committees. Meanwhile men might get easier access to these institutions and committees because they are more used to articulating their need and priorities in the public domain, than women.

According to my findings the ishyirahamwe Dukunde Abamugaye and Turwanye Icyorezo Sida had not managed to engage in sustainable activities. The two groups were involved with the production of traditional handcrafts and they lacked market to sell their products. They additionally lacked access to buy or lease land. I identified land as the key factor to be able to accumulate resources. The ishyirahamwe that had access to land had the opportunity to sell crops and further invest in livestock. Similarly Turwanye Ubukene did not have access to land, only off-farm wage work at the Foundation. The ishyirahamwe experienced that the money they earned went directly to subsistence purposes rather than investment. The issue of sustainability also includes activities that are a failure. Korandebe and Duteraninkunga received poultry from the Foundation. The chickens were supposed to give the members eggs that they could eat to balance their diet or sell. The two groups experienced that they were undertaking an activity that did not adapt to the rural poor reality. The chickens stopped laying eggs and many of them additionally died. The cause of death was attributed to low nutrition in the food mix and bad hygiene. Further the members could not afford the food expenses and the travel expenses to Remera where the food was purchased.

To sum up the findings mentioned above, each ishyirahamwe represented different opportunities to its members according to the collective assets ownership and the sustainability of activities undertaken by the groups.

The ishyirahamwe did not solely address economical issues, but also social issues. The members perceived the organization as a place they could share experiences, enhance their self esteem and solve personal problems.

The ishyirahamwe had major achievement in promoting gender equity and women’s empowerment by the means provided from the social funds, ikimina and isanduka. These
saving schemes enabled women access to emergency money. The money that the members
borrowed mostly went to school fees and health. The opportunity to take up loan made the
members less prone to chocks. Additionally 5 *ishyirahamwe* had access to public financial
services through ownership of bank accounts.

According to my findings many of the members the *ishyirahamwe* were poor, because they
could not manage to fulfil their basic needs such as having adequate food. In addition they
lacked access to medical care and access to safe water. These findings mentioned above
indicate that the *ishyirahamwe* activities undertaken by the most resource poor *ishyirahamwe
Dukunde Abamugaye, Turwanye Icyorezo Sida* and *Turwanye Ubukene*, did not contribute to
poverty alleviation. For these 3 groups the *ishyirahamwe* functioned more as a safety net for
times of crisis. Meanwhile for the more resourceful groups such as *Korandebe,
Duteraninkunga, Kagarwa* and *Giramata* the *ishyirahamwe* reduced there relative state of
poverty and enhanced their livelihoods.

The measures taken at the central level concerning women and poverty reduction can be
regarded as ambitious since they do not fully correspond to the grass root experience. The
rural women in Rwabutenge claimed that they do not feel that they are participating in the
formal decision making process. Although the GoR has addressed this problem by adapting
decentralization policy, the capacity in these structures is is weak. The *ishyirahamwe*
members claimed that if they had had political decision-making power their livelihoods
conditions would have been better. They emphasized that they would have access to basic
needs services and access to durable income generating opportunities.

Additionally the gender policies and legislations initiated by the GoR are not fully translated
into practice among the rural poor in Rwabutenge. Gender issues face resistance among both
women and man; young and old; wealthy and poor, because of deeply engrained traditional
practices and values such as the patrilineal inheritance pattern that prohibit girls and women
to inherit land and own livestock, and further many women are restricted to the domestic
domain and do not get the same opportunities as their male counterparts.

The problem might be related to the fact that the government and donors have a different
perception of the concept gender, than the rural vulnerable people. According to women and
men in Rwabutenge, the gender relations were not perceived as unequal. Further they argued
that women and men were supposed to have different roles and duties and that this did not
necessary imply women’s subordination to men, because women were respected and admired for doing their prescribed duties. Further it is culturally accepted that women can move into the public sphere to make money as long as they bring resources back into the household. Note that women’s empowerment is not the important issue, but her ability to earn money. According to my empirical data and observations the gender roles have changed which means women work outside the household, but the gender relations remain the same, which means that rural women and men still prefer to interact in accordance to customary laws, not the formal laws.

If gender equity, seen from the government and donors perspective, is going to take place in the rural household the GoR will have to provide sensitization programs that address the rural women’s and men’s attitudes to remove the negative gender stereotypes. The process of changing perceptions takes a long time. However some rural women have actively enjoyed the freedom that the gender legislations provide by being able to pursue income generating activities, own resources such as land and livestock and the right to inheritance, but the overall situation have not changed for women. The result is that women do both productive and reproductive work, which represents a challenge for women’s health and well being.

The GoR and the people of Rwanda have come a long way since 1994. The GoR is not only determined at providing development on its own terms, but is also posses a strong political will to address the countries problems. Only time will tell how effectively the GoR will deal with the challenges that Rwanda faces such as the high prevalence of HIV/Aids among the population, the widespread poverty and gender asymmetry.
7 References


UN. 2004a. *Frontline: the triumph of evil: 100 days of slaughter.*


8 Appendices

8.1 Questionnaires

A. Ishyiramwe questionnaire

How did they come together as a group?
Why did they decide to join the ishyiramwe?
How did they come to know about the Foundation? What role did the Foundation have in the forming of the groups?
What are the advantages of being in the ishyiramwe?
What are the disadvantages of being in a group?
How is the decision-making process in the group?
Do they have rules and regulations that govern the association?
Do they have scheduled meetings?
What issues do they normally discuss in the ishyiramwe meetings?
Do the group have a bank account? And if so how much capital do they have in the bank?
What are they going to do (invest) with the money in that is in the bank?
Do the group have any other forms of savings?

How frequent do they work in the association?
What do they do the other days when they are not working in the association?
Do women and men do the same activities or is there a gendered division of tasks?
Who owns the plot they are working on?
What crops do they grow on the plot?
What crops do they sell and to whom?
Are the prices of their agricultural products coherent to the market prices?

How do they spend the money they earn as a group?
To what extent has the association membership improved their livelihoods?
On what particular ways do they gain from the membership?
What has the group received from the Foundation? (Assistance, materials, livestock, skills and knowledge).

Do you experience the ishyirahamwe as a poverty reduction strategy?

Do you perceive yourselves as having access to the formal decision-making process of the country?

Do you define yourselves as poor? If so how do you define poverty?

If you had the opportunity to change your lives what would you do?

What should the government and donors do to assist you in changing you live?

Are you familiar with the government’s gender policy and legislation?

How do you perceive the concept gender?

B. Household cheque list

Natural capital:
What kind of natural capital do the household possess?
What kind of livelihoods activities do they undertake?
What kind of crops do the household cultivate and how much goes for consumption?

Human capital:
Education level of the household
How many children do they have enrolled in school?
How is the health status of the household members?

Financial capital:
What do the household have of means that can be translated into production and consumption?
Do the household have access to credit and loans?

Social capital:
What kind of social network do the household members engage in apart from the ishyirahamwe and that they can derive support?
What kind division of labour do the household have or what kind of taske is assigned to women, men and children in the household?

Physical capital:
What kind of and how many farm equipment do the household have?

How is the household access to public services? Do they have bikes?