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Gender Equality in Rwanda: What remains a stumbling block to full realization of gender parity in education?

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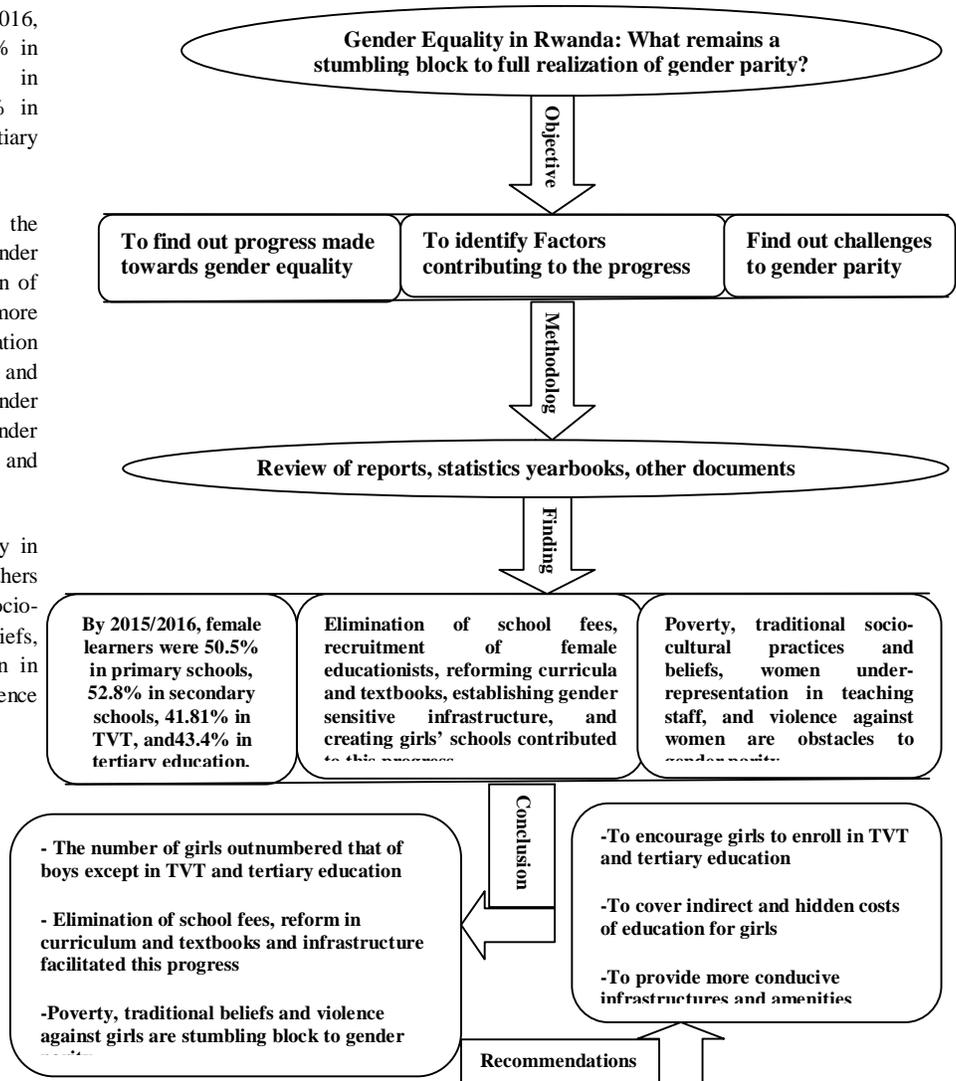
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RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS

- By the school year 2015/2016, female learners were 50.5% in primary schools, 52.8% in secondary schools, 41.81% in TVT, and43.4% in tertiary education.

- Factors contributing to the progress made to gender equality include: elimination of school fees, recruitment of more female teachers/education agents, reforming curricula and textbooks from gender perspective, establishing gender sensitive infrastructure, and creating girls' schools.

- Challenges to gender parity in Rwanda include among others poverty, traditional socio-cultural practices and beliefs, women under-representation in teaching staff, and violence against women.

GRAPHICAL ABSTRACT

Gender Equality in Rwanda: What remains a stumbling block to full realization of gender parity?

Objective

| To find out progress made towards gender equality | To identify Factors contributing to the progress | Find out challenges to gender parity |

Methodolog

Review of reports, statistics yearbooks, other documents

Finding

| By 2015/2016, female learners were 50.5% in primary schools, 52.8% in secondary schools, 41.81% in TVT, and43.4% in tertiary education. | Elimination of school fees, recruitment of female educationists, reforming curricula and textbooks, establishing gender sensitive infrastructure, and creating girls' schools contributed to this progress | Poverty, traditional socio-cultural practices and beliefs, women under-representation in teaching staff, and violence against women are obstacles to gender parity |

Conclusion

- The number of girls outnumbered that of boys except in TVT and tertiary education

- Elimination of school fees, reform in curriculum and textbooks and infrastructure facilitated this progress

-Poverty, traditional beliefs and violence against girls are stumbling block to gender parity

-To encourage girls to enroll in TVT and tertiary education

-To cover indirect and hidden costs of education for girls

-To provide more conducive infrastructures and amenities

Recommendations

ABSTRACT

Rwanda has made tremendous achievements in improving access of both males and females all levels of education. To this end, reforms and equity measures have been undertaken to promote gender equality within the Rwandan education system. However, while the proportion of female students is quite good at lower levels of education, it shrinks at higher educational ladder. In this perspective, enrollment, participation, completion and achievement rates of girls are still lower at secondary and tertiary levels compared to boys. Another discrepancy is observed in the fields of studies and university of choice. In fact, girls are more likely to enroll in courses related to social studies mostly available in private institutions rather than enrolling in science related courses available in public universities. Furthermore, females are under-represented in both academic and administration positions at secondary and tertiary levels of education. Therefore, the key objectives of this paper were to highlight the progress made towards achievement of gender equality, to identify the factors that contributed to that achievement, and finally to explore what remains a stumbling to full realization of gender parity in Rwandan education system. This paper was mainly a desktop research that used different official documents including statistics yearbooks, reports, and strategic plans among others. The study revealed that the number of girls outnumbered that of boys at lower levels of education, elimination of school fees, reforming curricula and establishing gender sensitive infrastructure contributed to this progress. Poverty and some traditional socio-cultural beliefs are key challenges to gender parity. Government and other stakeholders were recommended to sensitize and encourage girls to enroll in TVT and universities, and provide more gender sensitive infrastructure and amenities.

INTRODUCTION

The Rwandan society like the rest of Africa, has been characterized by patriarchy where the management of public affairs was predominantly a preserve of men (Parliament of Rwanda, 2014). According to Gender Monitoring Office (GMO) (2009) "Women were mostly subjected to domestic chores, child and family care. They were under represented in almost all sector of human life: education, politics, economy, security services, and health among many others." GMO goes on to state that it is just after the 1994 genocide against Tutsi that representation of Rwandan women started to gain popularity. Policies and gender equity measures have since then taken to ensure gender equality in all sectors. The Government of Rwanda has therefore articulated Gender equality in all its key documents as a cross-cutting pillar for development. The national Vision 2020, the Economic Development and Poverty Reduction Strategy (EDPRSI and II) and Education Sector Strategic Plan (ESSP 2013/2014-2017/2018), all clearly indicate the government commitment to promote gender equality and empowerment in all sectors (Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning, 2003, 2007).

The commitment of the Government of Rwanda emerged from the global commitments to empower women and promote gender equality in all spheres of life. According to GMO (2009) one of the global initiative to promote gender equality and empowerment was the first World Conference on Women (WCW) which was held in Mexico in 1975, and marked the start of the "UN Decade for Women". Furthermore, 18ᵗʰ December 1979 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women was adopted. This convention reaffirmed the need and the will to act to promote equality between women and men by calling all governments, the international community and civil society, including non-governmental organisations, to take strategic actions including modifying or abolishing existing policies, laws, regulations, customs and practices that which constitute discrimination against women. However, it was not until 1995, when the fourth WWCW was held in Beijing, that the issue of gender equality became a high-profile issue for the UN. The Declaration and Platform for Action adopted in Beijing marked the transition from the concept of the advancement of women to that of promoting equality between the sexes, something which requires the participation of both women and men, and of society as a whole. Accordingly, the Beijing Platform for Action required governments, the international community and civil society to work together to promote and achieve gender equality (GMO, 2009, Parliament of Rwanda, 2014).

It is also very important to mention that the concept of gender equality was further emphasized in the Mellenium Development Goals (MDGs) which have been recently changed into Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In this perspective, goal 3 of the MDGs: Promote Gender Equality and empower women and goal

5 of the SDGs: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls are other international commitments initiated by UN to call on governments, international and local organizations as well as the civil society to promote gender equality by eliminating gender disparities in all spheres of life.

Understanding Gender equity, equality and parity

Today, the concept of gender has become a debatable issue in our society and an important dimension in the analysis and the design of social and economic policies. According to the Human Development Report (1995) *"Human development is a process of enlarging choices for all people, not just unjust and discriminatory one part of society. Such a process becomes if most women are excluded from its benefits. And the continuing indictment of modern progress."* This statement illustrates the integration of the gender dimension, that is, both men and women, in the human development concept. Gender equality therefore is mandatory for sustainable development and economic growth. The term gender equality refers to the situation where boys and girls, women and men are equally represented in all spheres of society, for example in the education system, in parliament etc, in other words, gender equality refers to equal access to social goods, services and resources and equal opportunities in all spheres of life for both men and women. According to IIEP (2011) Gender equality is achieved when women and men enjoy the same rights and opportunities across all sectors of society, including economic participation and decision-making, and when the different behaviours, aspirations and needs of women and men are equally valued and favoured. While the term gender equality is often used interchangeably with the related principle of *equity, the terms are different. Equity* refers to the principle or degree of *fairness*. According to APA (2011) Gender equity is concerned with bringing fairness in gender representation. It is any special treatment/action taken to reverse the historical and social disadvantages that prevent female and male learners from accessing and benefiting from education on equal grounds. Hence, gender equity in education encompasses a wide variety of educational models, programs, and strategies that may be considered fair, but not necessarily equal. This means that in the course of education process resources and other development opportunities may be offered to women for example because they deserve or need to be uplifted. It is therefore in this perspective that it is said that *'equity'* is the process; *'equality'* is the outcome," given that equity (what is fair and just) may not, in the process of educating students, reflect strict equality (what is applied, allocated, or distributed equally). To this end, gender parity which is an indicator of the ratio of girls to boys, is reached when there is equal representation and participation of male and female learners in education (APA, 2011; IIEP, 2011).

The literature on definitions of terms related to gender equality provides enough information and therefore reasons to confirm that gender equity is process that leads to gender equality. This implies that without equity measures, equality cannot be achieved. Gender equality should therefore be examined in its dimensions. To this end, the United Nations Millennium Project has suggested that gender equality encompasses three main dimensions: (a) *capabilities*, including education, health, and nutrition; (b) *access to resources and opportunities*, including access to economic assets, such as income and employment, and to political opportunities, such as gender representation in political bodies; and (c) *security*, including reduced vulnerability to violence and conflict (UNDP, 2015, UNICEF and UNGEI, 2009). It is to be mentioned that together, these dimensions contribute to women's individual well-being and enable women and girls to make strategic choices and decisions, that is, to be *empowered* (UNICEF, 2009). Very recently, more thoughts have gone into what gender equality in education should entail. For instance, Herz (2006) highlighted that in order to promote gender equality in education the following should be taken into account: making girls' education affordable, making education a practical reality, making schools more girl-friendly and improving education quality. In the same vein, in its *EFA Global Monitoring Report 2008* UNESCO (2009) identifies three sets of provisions that are essential to improving the quality of learning in school, both in general and for girls in particular. These provisions include: reforming curriculum and textbooks; enhancing the number and quality of teachers, including female teachers; and making the teaching-learning process itself, including the school environment, more child- and girl-friendly.

Likewise, with the aim of reinforcing the need for bringing gender equality to, within, and through education UNICEF and The United Nations Girls' Education Initiative (UNGEI) (2009) develop a Gender Equality Framework that describes four dimensions of gender equality in education. The four dimensions of gender equality are conceptualized in Figure 1.
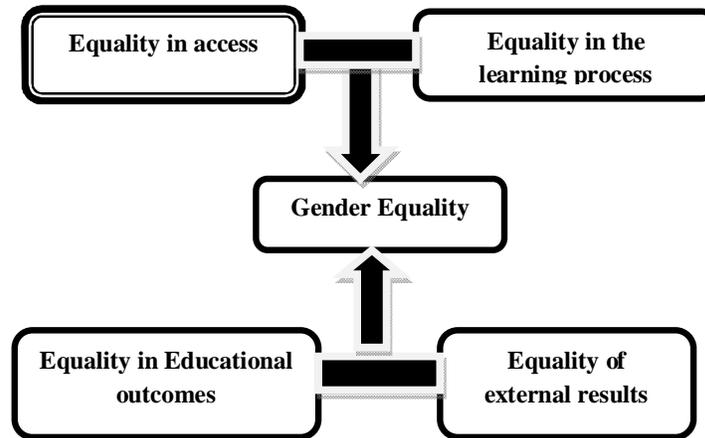
Figure 1: Dimensions of gender equality
Source: Researchers' conceptualization of gender equity based on UNICEF&UNGEI framework for gender equality

The four dimensions of gender equality in education are therefore examined in details as follows:

1. Equality of access

Access means the ways in which educational institutions and policies ensure-or at least strive to ensure-that students have equal and equitable opportunities to take full advantage of their education. Equality of access therefore refers to the ways girls and boys are offered equitable opportunities to gain admission to formal, non-formal, or other forms education. Hence, providing equality of access requires schools as well as the whole education system to provide additional services or remove any actual or potential barriers that might prevent some students from equitable participation in certain courses or academic programs. According to USAID (2008) access to education entails the following:

a) Access to assistive technologies, accommodations, and modified school facilities that make full participation in school programs possible for all students (girls and boys).
b) Access to equal opportunities in educational programs and activities regardless of gender.
c) Access to adequate health care and nutritional services.
d) Access to pre-school or kindergarten so that students enter school prepared to learn and succeed academically.
e) Access to intensive instruction in the same language of instruction.
f) Access to counseling, social services, academic support, and other resources that can help students who are at risk of failure or dropping out remain in school, succeed academically, graduate, and pursue postsecondary education.

g) Access to technology, including high-speed internet connections and adequate hardware (computers, laptops, tablets) and software (particularly learning applications) so that students have equitable access to the same digital and online learning opportunities regardless of their family's income level or ability to pay for these technologies.

It is to be mentioned that the indicator of access the actual attendance of girls rather than their enrollment at all levels of education.

2. Equality in the learning process

Learning process refers to process of gaining knowledge or skill by studying, practicing, being taught, or experiencing something (Merriam Webster Dictionary, 2016). Equality in the learning process therefore refers to exposing both girls and boys to the same curricula, teaching methods and materials that are free of stereotypes and gender bias, as well as having the freedom to learn, explore and develop skills in all academic and extracurricular offerings. According USAID (2008) to reach equality in the learning process entails the following:

a) Training different education stakeholder in gender awareness prior to developing new curricula.

b) Training teachers in inclusive teaching practices to help them integrate students who have been marginalized due to gender discrimination.

c) Increase school safety and decrease violence by maintaining safe and secure latrines; protecting girls on their way to and from school; abandoning corporal punishment; training teaching staff and students to prevent

violence; and enforcing teacher codes of conduct.

d) Institute policies that encourage girls' participation in technical training.

e) End academic streaming based on gender stereotypes (e.g., girls streamed into the humanities and boys into science and technology).

3. Equality of educational outcomes

Equality of educational outcomes means that girls and boys enjoy equal opportunities to achieve and outcomes are based on their individual talents and efforts. According to USAID (2008) to ensure fair chances for achievement, the length of school careers, academic qualifications, and diplomas should not differ based on a person's sex. Equality of educational outcomes also requires that mechanisms for evaluating individual achievement should be free of any gender bias. Furthermore classroom tests, national examinations, and international assessments should also influence both boys' and girls' confidence levels and their perceptions of their abilities and what is expected of them. To ensure equality of educational outcomes, USAID (2008) recommends the following interventions:

a) Training teachers to understand how their perceptions or expectations of male and female students may influence how they assess students' progress, mark examinations, and provide feedback.

b) Reviewing existing tests, examinations, and assessments to determine whether the examples and language used are free of gender bias and stereotypes.

c) Removing any gender-specific content and ensure that examples reflect a balance in girls' and boys' experiences.

4. Equality of external results

Equality of external results occurs when the status of men and women, their access to goods and resources and their ability to contribute to, participate in, and benefit from economic, social, cultural, and political activities are equal. This implies that career opportunities, the time needed to secure employment after leaving full-time education, and the earnings of men and women with similar qualifications and experience are equal.

To ensure equality of external results USAID (2008) recommends governments to adopt the following measures:

a) Enact and enforce labor laws that ensure equal opportunity and pay equity.

b) Conduct social mobilization campaigns aimed at increasing women's and girls' status and value in society.

c) Promote legal reforms that ensure women and girls have equal protections and rights with regards to family law, citizenship, property ownership, political participation, inheritance, and the financial sector.

d) Provide leadership training for women.

e) Promote infrastructure enhancements that encourage economic growth, reduce poverty, improve families' health and well being, and ease the burden on women and girls.

f) Develop programs to remove implicit or explicit barriers to women's participation in nontraditional sectors, including targeted recruitment, training, and support initiatives for women.

The four dimensions of gender equality are related, but that relationship is complex and not necessarily linear. Parity in enrollment and greater gender equality in schooling can, and often do, coexist with inequalities outside of education. Hence, the four dimensions of gender equality in education demonstrate that gender parity is not the only milestone against which success should be measured. Educators must understand how stereotypes limit the choices and opportunities for boys and girls and obscure their needs and differences. This understanding will help educators create learning opportunities that will enable all children to flourish and reach their full potential.

It is to be noted that consideration of all the four dimensions of gender equality is not enough to achieve gender equality in education. This is because there is a number of factors that can affect the realization of gender equality if there are not controlled. According USAID (2008), UNICEF and UNGEI (2009) and IIEP (2011) these factor include: poverty, prohibitive religious practices and beliefs, traditional social-cultural practices, women under-representation in key decision making positions, increased violence against women, and limited infrastructure and amenities. Each of these factors is nuanced as follows:

a) **Poverty:** It increases child labor for both girls and boys, by particularly putting girls at a distinct disadvantage.

b) **Prohibitive religious practices and beliefs**: These limit girls' access to education especially in Muslim countries.

c) **Traditional socio-cultural practices**: these hinder women from attending schools in many African and Asian countries.

d) Women under-representation in key decision making positions in both Government and private sector.

e) Increased violence against women: this is characterized by physical, sexual or psychological harm or threats of such acts.

f) Limited infrastructure and amenities: Girls often drop out or fail to attend for reasons such as distance from home, lack of or poor sanitary facilities, class size, or poor school security.

These factors should be controlled or minimized to fully realize gender equality in education. The ability to control or minimize them requires commitment of all actors: individual commitment, household commitment, community commitment and government commitment (DFID, 2015).

Research Objectives

The following objectives guided this paper:

- To find out the progress made towards achievement of gender equality at all levels of education

- To find out factors that contributed to the progress made towards gender equality.

- To assess the challenges faced towards full realization of gender parity in education.

Theoretical framework

The paper was guided by the Theory of Change (TOC). The theory explains the process of change by outlining causal linkages in an initiative i.e. its short term, immediate, and long term outcomes. Trying to explain gender equality, women and girls' empowerment using the theory of change, the DFID PPA Learning Partnership Gender Group extended the theory to theory of change on gender equality and women and girl's empowerment (TOCGEWGE). For DFID (2015), the theory of change on gender and women and girls' empowerment articulates a vision for gender equality and explains the relationship between gender equality, achieving empowerment and securing women's and girls' rights. The rationale for extending the theory of change was that the society was still experiencing dominant social norms, policies and laws, institutions, and civil societies that support male dominance. Condone and perpetuate unequal power relations between women and men, and undermining women's social, political and economic rights (DFID, 2015). To this end, the theory of change on gender equality and women's and girls' empowerment provides a wider context within which individuals and organizations should work to achieve gender equality and women's empowerment. This context has been conceptualized in Figure 2:
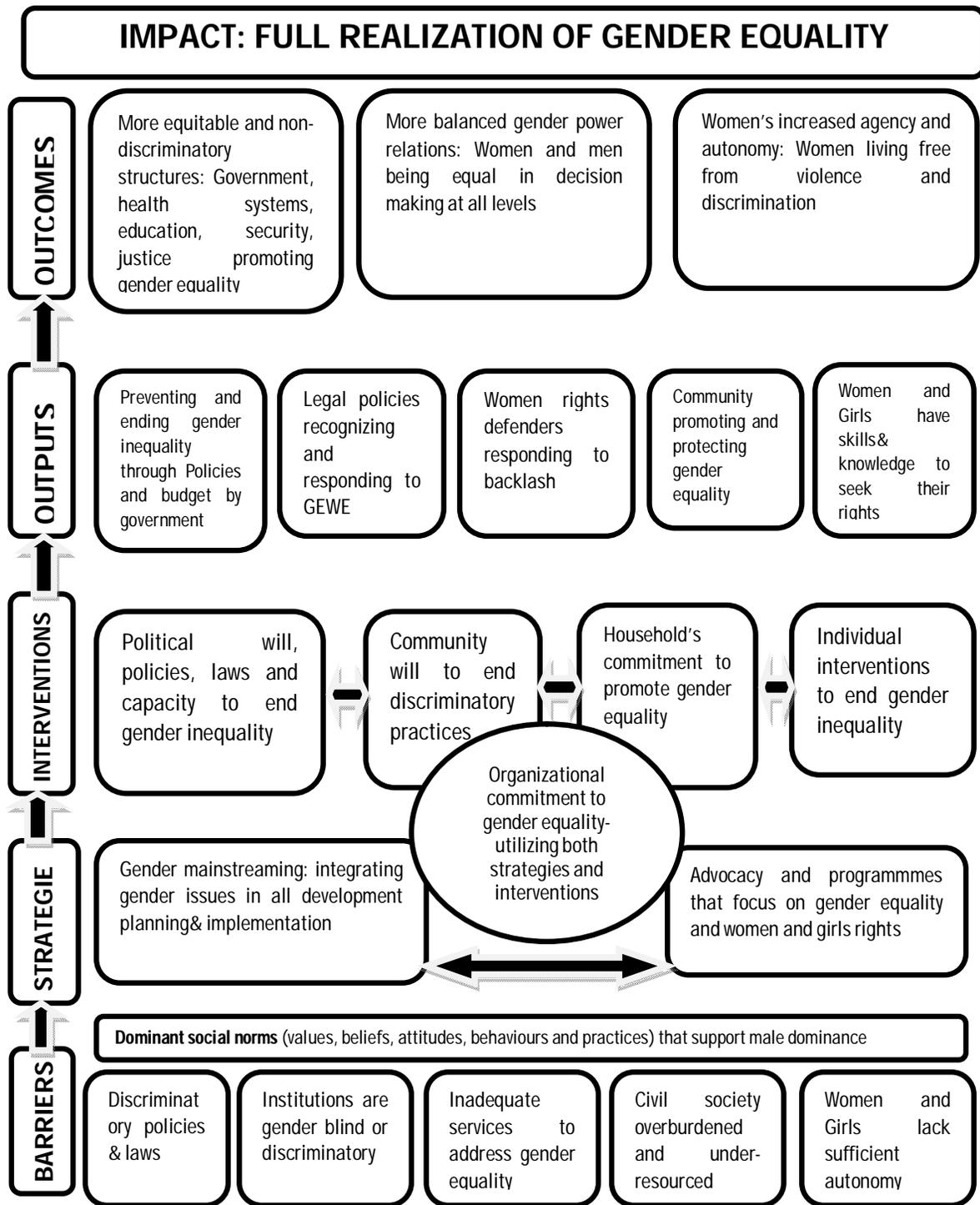
IMPACT: FULL REALIZATION OF GENDER EQUALITY

OUTCOMES

More equitable and non-discriminatory structures: Government, health systems, education, security, justice promoting gender equality

More balanced gender power relations: Women and men being equal in decision making at all levels

Women's increased agency and autonomy: Women living free from violence and discrimination

OUTPUTS

Preventing and ending gender inequality through Policies and budget by government

Legal policies recognizing and responding to GEWE

Women rights defenders responding to backlash

Community promoting and protecting gender equality

Women and Girls have skills& knowledge to seek their rights

INTERVENTIONS

Political will, policies, laws and capacity to end gender inequality

Community will to end discriminatory practices

Household's commitment to promote gender equality

Individual interventions to end gender inequality

Organizational commitment to gender equality-utilizing both strategies and interventions

STRATEGIE

Gender mainstreaming: integrating gender issues in all development planning& implementation

Advocacy and programmmes that focus on gender equality and women and girls rights

BARRIERS

Dominant social norms (values, beliefs, attitudes, behaviours and practices) that support male dominance

Discriminatory policies & laws

Institutions are gender blind or discriminatory

Inadequate services to address gender equality

Civil society overburdened and under-resourced

Women and Girls lack sufficient autonomy

Figure 2: Full Realization of Gender Equality

Source: Adapted from DFID PPA Learning Partnership Gender Group.

METHODOLOGY

This paper was desktop research whereby different official documents were thoroughly and critically reviewed to get insight into the progress made towards gender equality, factors that contributed to the progress made and the challenges to full achievement of gender parity. The official documents that were scrutinized include: Rwanda education statistics yearbook 2013, 2014, 2015, Education Sector Strategic Plan, National Gender Policy, and the National Gender Statistics Report 2016 among many others. The paper was premised on the theory of change on gender equality and women and girls' empowerment as extend by DFID gender group from the theory of change (TOC). Tables containing percentages were used to present quantitative findings and qualitative data were thematically analyzed and presented verbatim. As a desktop research, this paper was completed by referenced sources duly acknowledged and where texts, data, figures and tables have been borrowed from other sources, they have been accredited and references cited in accordance with anti-plagiarism regulations.

RESULTS

This section presents the findings of this research in accordance with the objectives that were set.

(i) PROGRESS MADE TOWARDS ACHIEVEMENT OF GENDER EQUALITY

In line with MDGs and Dakar declaration on EFA, there have been considerable improvements in gender equity: girls' enrolment, participation, completion and transition rates increased tremendously in Rwanda at all levels of education. In Primary and secondary education, the number of female students outnumbers the number of males students. The tables below provide more details with this regards.

Table 1: Profile of Primary education students from 2011 to 2015

Academic year / Gender	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
boys	1,150,205	1,180,484	1,183,306	1,181,715	1,214,019
%	*49.1%*	*49.3%*	*49.3%*	*49.2%*	*49.5%*
girls	1,190,941	1,214,190	1,218,858	1,217,724	1,236,686
%	*50.9%*	*50.7%*	*50.7%*	*50.8%*	*50.5%*

Source: 2015 Education Statistical Year Book & National Gender Statistics Report 2016

Throughout different years covered by this research, the number of girls in primary education is slightly higher than the number of boys. The percentages are within the range of 50.5% and 50.9%. The highest gap between the number of girls and the number of boys in primary schools was in 2011 whereby the girls were 50.9% and the number of boys was 49.1%. Thus, the difference was 1.8%. The percentage of girls in the two following years were 50.7%, this implies that the gap between girls and boys decreased of 0.2%. In 2014, the number of girls increased of 0.1% and therefore, the gap became 1.6%. In 2015, the gap decreased to 1%. Thus, the number of girls was 50.5% and the number of boys was 49.5%. In general, the gap between girls and boys remains constant at all the levels of primary school throughout different years covered in this study. Girl children are given equal opportunities with their brothers. This gap in numbers of girls and the number of boys enrolling and attending primary education does not mean that girls are more privileged boys. It is rather because the number of girl children is in general, slightly higher than the number of boy children. This fact proves that the parents' mindset about education of girl children has improved. At primary education level, children are given their rights to education and the enrolment meets the target. Is it the same at the next level? The following gives an account of the situation at secondary level.

Table 2: Profile of Secondary education students from 2011 to 2015

Academic year / Gender	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Male	235,750	255,503	268,581	266,579	256,634
% of Male	*48.5%*	*47.8%*	*47.4%*	*47.2%*	*47.2%*
Female	250,687	279,209	297,789	298,733	287,302
% of Female	*51.5%*	*52.2%*	*52.6%*	*52.9%*	*52.8%*

Source: 2015 Education Statistical Year Book & **National Gender Statistics Report 2016**

The statistics of students enrolled in primary schools show that the number of girl students is to be higher than the number of boy student; the gap is estimated between 1% and 1.8%. This gap increases significantly in secondary schools. It is estimated between 3% and 5.7% of difference between girls' number and boys' number. The number of girls enrolled in secondary schools has been continuously increasing from 2011 to 2014. Each year, the number f girls in secondary schools increased significantly. A very small an insignificant decrease was observed in 2015; where the percentages passed from 52.9% in 2014 to 52.8% in 2015. Comparing the statistics of students in primary school and those in secondary school, one may wonder the reason behind this increase of the gap. A number of policies have been established to strengthen the education of girls. Among them, we can mention the policy of 9YBE and 12YBE, affirmative action in favor of girls among others. Although the policy of 9YBE and 12 YBE does not discriminate boys, it solved the problem of long distance students used to undergo to access schools. This has favored most girl students because they used to be victims of it. When the school is nearby the students, they can manage to help their families in carrying out some task at their home and attend school. In Rwandan culture, girls used to drop out schools for they were obliged to go to help their families to carry out domestic works. Increasing the number, of schools and reducing the distance students do to school, has made it possible to marry both domestic works and attending school especially for girls. In addition to this, a number of exclusive girls' schools have been established with regard s to affirmative action. In line with this trend, the pass mark to be admitted to secondary school for girls was lower than the pass mark for boy. This has also contributed the increment of the number of girl students in detriment of boy students. Is the situation the same in TVT? The following table summarizes students profile in TVT education.

Table 3: Profile of TVT Education students from 2011 to 2015

Academic year / Gender	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Male	35,843	40,321	47,755	52,369	54,912
%	52.80%	54.30%	56.90%	56.30%	58.19%
Female	32,076	33, 999	36,138	40,655	39,461
%	47.20%	45.70%	43.10%	43.70%	41.81%

Source: 2015 Education Statistical Year Book & **National Gender Statistics Report 2016**

Contrary to primary and secondary general education, the number of male students in TVT, drastically out numbers the number of female students. From 2011 to 2015, the gap between female students and male students has progressively been increasing. There was a gap of 4.4% in 2011 which increased each year. In 2015, the gap was of 16.38%. This does not mean however that the total number of girls has decreased within this period of time cover by this research. The total number of girls in TVT has increased but not at the same rate as for their male counterpart. It means that the rate at which the number of male students increases is much higher than the rate at which the number of female students increases. The percentage of female students therefore decreases though the total number of them increases. This is in comparison with male students. This seems to be a challenge to the system of professional training in Rwanda Education system. The gap in professional training will be reflected at the labor market. This may be reason why in most technical jobs, men are predominant compared to

women. This problem may find its roots in the culture because such jobs have been reserved to men for many years in the history. Thus professional training seems to be exclusive and gender biased. The number of female students in TVT education is much lower than the number of boys. This might have an implication at the labor market. The number of female will also decrease at the labor market as a consequence to this trend. The policy maker would think about how to deal with this issue. Table 1, 2, and 3 presented the statistics in primary, general and TVT secondary education. How is the situation in post secondary education? The following tables give an account of gender equality at post secondary education level in Rwanda.

Table4: Profile of tertiary education students from 201 to 2015.

Academic year Gender	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Male	41,875	42,750	47,220	47,867	48,868
%	*56.8%*	*55.8%*	*55.9%*	*55.0%*	*56.6%*
Female	31,799	33,879	37,228	39,146	37,447
%	*43.2%*	*44.2%*	*44.1%*	*45.0%*	*43.4%*

Source: 2015 education statistical year book & National Gender Statistics Report 2016

While the number of female students in primary and secondary schools is higher than the number of male students, it is the reverse when it comes to tertiary education. The number of male students is much higher than the number of female students at this level. It is opposing to the reality reflected in primary and secondary schools. The gap is very dip and varies between 13.6% in 2011 to 10% in 2014. It has been realized that the big number of female students at university level are enrolled in private institutions. The number of female students offsets the number of male students in private universities. In front of such situation, one may wonder the reason behind this imbalance while the number of female students who complete secondary school is higher than the number of male students. A number of reasons justify this trend; among them we can mention the following: the policy of affirmative action is not applied at university level, the socio-cultural effects, violence against women, the small number of female academic staff at secondary and university level among others. These factors will be discussed further later in the upcoming paragraphs. Nevertheless, the number of female students at university level bas been increasing from 2011to 2014 as follow: 43.2% in 2011; 44.2% in 2012; 44.1% in 2013 and 45% in 2014. A slight decrease was observed in 2015 where the percentage was 43.4%. This shows that more efforts are still to be made to increase the number of female students enrolling in the universities to achieve the gender equity in Rwandan Education System.

Table 5: Enrolment of students in tertiary education by exit award in 2015

Awards	Total	Male		Female	
		Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Certificate	1,259	661	52.5%	598	47.5%
Diploma/Advanced Diploma	13,159	8,266	62.8%	4,893	37.2%
Bachelor's degree	66,519	36,330	54.6%	30,189	45.4%
Post-graduate Certificate	57	40	70.2%	17	29.8%
Post-graduate Diploma	1,204	808	67.1%	396	32.9%
Master's	3,948	2,625	66.5%	1,323	33.5%
PhD	169	138	81.7%	31	18.3%
TOTAL	**86,315**	**48,868**	**56.6%**	**37,447**	**43.4%**

Source: 2015 education statistical year book & **National Gender Statistics Report 2016**

Taking into consideration the number of students by exit award, the number of female students is much inferior to the number of male students in all exit awards. The gap keeps on increasing at post graduate level as the level of education increases. While the percentage of male students at bachelors' degree level is 9.2% higher than

(ii) FACTORS THAT CONTRIBUTED TO THE PROGRESS MADE TOWARDS GENDER EQUALITY

Considerable achievements towards achievement of gender equality in education have been made in Rwanda. Apart from the government government's strong commitment, a number of social and institutional factors have contributed to this progress. These factors include: elimination of schools at primary and secondary levels, recruitment of more female teachers/education agents, reforming curriculum and textbooks, provision of conducive infrastructure, and community or NGO managed schools among others. Each of these factors needs to be particularly examined.

1. Elimination of school fees: Although tuition fees are not the only financial burden that poor families have to bear, school fees contribute to the continuing exclusion of girls in education especially in rural areas (UNICEF and UNGEI, 2009). This is because when parents can afford to keep only one child in school, daughters usually lose out. it is in this regard that Rwanda as many other countries of the world has abolished tuition fees first in primary and lower secondary and then upper secondary schools to increase enrolment. Elimination of school fees has contributed significantly to improvement of enrolment in Rwanda, putting girls at a particular advantage.

2. More female teachers/education agents at lower levels of education

the percentage of female students, the gap increases to 33% at the masters' level and 63.4% at PhD level. This gender based gap in the number of students enrolment at the post graduate level reflects the same problem in the academic staffing at Tertiary education institutions in Rwanda.

According to UNICEF and UNGEI (2009) girls may fail to attend when they school environment is not friendly, that is, when they fear violence and intimidation in the classroom by male teachers or pupils. To this end, increased number of female teachers and other education agents is necessary to make the school environment girls-friendly and to achieve gender equality in education. To this end, Olsson (2010) points that, "It is generally assumed that women teachers provide good role models for girls in school. They allay parents' fears of security issues within the school, and their presence shows that the teaching profession is a suitable aspiration for girls currently in school." Bearing this in mind, the government of Rwanda has recruited more female teachers to motivate girls to enroll. The government of Rwanda has also recruited 'matrons' who are commonly known as 'animatrices' in all secondary schools to take care of girls students at school. The matrons or '*animatrices*' monitor girls' attendance and work with teachers to ensure a safe and friendly school environment to girls. They also provide guidance and counseling to girls in case of any violence or learning difficulty. When girls drop out of school, the *animatrices* talk with families to find out the reasons why and to encourage the girls to return. The emphasis on the recruitment of female teachers and animatrices significant increased the number of female staff in primary schools to the extent that female staff outnumbered male staff in primary schools. The following table gives the profile of primary education staff from 2011 to 2015.

Table 6: Profile of Primary education staff from 2011 to 2015

Academic Year / Gender	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Male	19,513	19,066	18,830	19,257	19,529
% of Male	*48.4%*	*47.2%*	*46.9%*	*46.7%*	46.5%
Female	20,786	21,331	21,329	21,935	22,476
% of Female	*51.6%*	*52.8%*	*53.1%*	*53.3%*	53.5%

Source: 2015 Education Statistical Year Book & National Gender Statistics Report 2016

As shown in the table above, the number of staff in primary education outnumbers that of males. The number of female staff has been increasing over the years. The number of female staff in primary

education has a positive effect on the boost of the number of girls enrolling in primary school. Naturally, women are more friendly to children than men. They can meet the needs and the

expectations of children better than men can. Female children feel safe at school with female teachers and the school retention rate becomes higher.

3. Reforming curricula and textbooks from gender perspective

To promote gender equality within the Rwandan education system curriculum as well as textbooks were revised. The reason behind the revision of curriculum and textbooks was that they were male based i.e. many aspects of gender equality were missing in the former curriculum and textbooks. This was due to the belief of many Rwandans and of many other Africans that girls are not able to study subjects related to science and mathematics, instead they able to study education, nursing and some social studies only. In this perspective, Bista (2006) puts that "Girls are believed to be less able to learn mathematics and science, are less able to learn in general." Likewise, UNICEF and UNGEI (2009) point out in some countries girls are denied access to manual arts, technical subjects or higher mathematics, which can enhance their employment opportunities. And even when they are permitted to enroll in such courses, they often find that textbooks and teaching are geared mainly to boys. They therefore recommend government to revise their curriculum in all its components: Teaching and learning materials/methods, evaluation and assessment procedures and language policy to make it more gender sensitive. It is in this regard that the Government of Rwanda embarked on revision of curriculum and all related textbooks especially those for science to relate them to women's and girls' daily experience. This has increased the number of girls who enrolled at all levels of education as shown in the previous section.

4. Conducive infrastructure to female students

According to UNICEF and UNGEI (2009) "Girls are also deprived of education when the school environment is hostile to them (when they fear violence and intimidation in the classroom by male teachers and pupils, for example); when schools are located at a distance parents believe is too far for girls to travel safely; or when school facilities are designed in ways that girls find unacceptable (for instance, when they lack separate toilets for boys and girls)." Conducive environment is therefore mandatory for gender equality in education. It is in this regard that to promote gender equality in Rwandan education system, the Government of Rwanda has serious efforts to make school infrastructures girls-friendly. This was done by establishing *"icyumba cy'umkobwa"* meaning girl's room in almost all primary and secondary schools in Rwanda. In this room tools such sanitary towels are provided to be used by girls during their menstruation period. Furthermore, toilets and other sanitation facilities

such as wash rooms were also improved in such a way that those for girls were separated from those of boys. All these have significantly contributed to girls' enrolment and participation in primary and secondary as the learning environment has been made friendly and their privacy has been catered for.

5. Community and NGO managed girls' schools: Community and NGO managed girls schools are playing an important role in promoting gender equality in Rwanda. Community and NGO managed schools are those schools financed and managed by parents or NGO to provide education to girls especially in science. It is to be noted that in some circumstances, these schools receive some assistance from public sector to contribute to their effective running. This assistance include: provision of teaching/learning materials and teachers. In Rwanda these schools have been established to promote girls education in science; an area that they are lagging behind. Most of these schools are run by NGOs that advocate for girls' rights with specific emphasis to their right to education. This is the case of FAWE Girls School Gisozi and FAWE Girls School Kayonza, Maranyundo Girls School, and Akilah Institute for Women in Kigali among others.

(iii) THE CHALLENGES TO FULL REALIZATION OF GENDER EQUALITY IN EDUCATION

Although considerable achievements towards achievement of gender equality have been made there are still socio-economic factors gender equality within the Rwandan education system. These factors hinder girls' ability to learn, they reduce parental incentives to invest in their daughters' education, because some of them prompt them to dropout or not to enroll. Dealing with these factors is therefore critical to improve girls' participation at all levels and area of education for full realization of gender parity in education in Rwanda. These factors include: poverty, traditional Socio-cultural beliefs and practice, Women under representation in teaching staff at higher levels of education, and the increased violence against women. Each of these factors is particularly examined.

1. Poverty

The elimination of school fees at the primary level is thought to be the primary factor in raising overall enrolment rates and in reaching gender parity at the primary level (Huggins and Randell, 2007). However, the school fees is not the only financial burden that families have to bear, there are other hidden costs of education that continue exclude girls in education. For Huggins and Randell 35% of Rwandan families say that they withdraw their children before they complete primary schooling because of the inability to afford these

costs. Hence, poverty remains a key impediment to achieving gender equality in education in Rwanda. Many students from poor families drop out of school before completing their education and go for jobs to help their families survive. The majority of these students who stop their studies to contribute to the survival of their families are girls. They accept any job they find to survive or supplement the incomes of their families. Some of them are house girls, baby sitters or they do any other unskilled job.

2. Traditional socio-cultural practices and beliefs

Socio-cultural practices continue to hinder women from attending schools. In The Rwandan tradition it was believed that the most important wealth a woman can possess is a husband. The belief is not completely eradicated till today. This belief continues to influence young ladies to marry at early age. Once married, it becomes very difficult to pursue her education since marriage is appertained with other responsibilities which are demanding in terms of time and finance. As Bista (2006) pointed out, "Girls are believed to be less able to learn mathematics and science, are less able to learn in general." This belief is still in the minds of many Rwandan girls who believe that they are less able to learn and their role is to take care of children and husband. They therefore do not enroll or they drop out of school very early. Trying to explain some of the reasons

associated with low enrolment and participation of girls, Huggins and Randell (2007) state that girls in Rwanda, particularly in rural areas, continue to be responsible for household tasks, such as fetching water and gathering firewood. They also care for younger siblings or aged and sick relatives, particularly those suffering from HIV/Aids. For them, these responsibilities may prevent girls from attending school, or may limit the time which they can devote to their studies.

3. Women under-representation in teaching staff at higher level of education

In Rwandan institutions of higher education staff, women are under-represented especially in academic positions. This contributes to low enrollment of girls at higher learning institutions. This is because they don't have role models and hence they are not motivated. To this end, Olsson (2010) insisted that "It is generally assumed that women teachers provide good role models for girls in school. They allay parents' fears of security issues within the school, and their presence shows that the teaching profession is a suitable aspiration for girls currently in school." Consequently, girls enrollment still lag behind that of boys especially at higher levels of education. The following tables portray the image of the staff situation on the ground.

Table 7: Profile of secondary education staff from 2011 to 2015

Academic year / gender	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Male Staff	14,818	16,936	18,250	19,196	19,387
% of Male Staff	*72.2%*	*72.6%*	*71.5%*	*70.8%*	*70.1%*
Female Staff	5,704	6,399	7,282	7,920	8,257
% of Female Staff	*27.8%*	*27.4%*	*28.5%*	*29.2%*	*29.9%*

Source: 2015 Education Statistical Year Book

The number of female staff at secondary level has been increasing from 2011 to 2015. The percentage increased from 27.8% in 2011 to 29.9% in 2015. Nonetheless, this percentage is still very low compared to their counterparts, male. The number of male staff in secondary school is much higher than the number of female staff. This may result from the gap of students in higher education. To qualify to teach in secondary school, a university degree is required. Nevertheless, it

has been noticed that the number of female is still low in tertiary education. To increase the number of female staff at secondary level it is required to increase the number of female students enrolling at tertiary level, especially, specializing in teacher education. The influence of this underrepresentation of female staff in secondary education would have implication on the female students enrolling in universities because most of the female students have female staff as their role models.

Table 8: Profile of TVT Education Trainers from 2011 to 2015

Academic Year Gender	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Male	1055	1939	2413	2870	3734
%	76.39%	78.79%	79.90%	79.83%	79.09%
Female	336	522	607	725	987
%	23.61%	21.21%	20.10%	20.17%	20.91%

Source: 2015 Education Statistical Year Book & & **National Gender Statistics Report 2016**

The number of male trainers in TVT is much higher than the number of female. More importantly, the percentage of female trainers decreases over the years. It passed from 23.61% in 2011 to 20.91% in 2015. This decrease goes hand in hand with the decrease of the Percentage of female students enrolling in TVT. It has drastically decreased from 47.20 in 2011 to 41.81% in 2015. This correlation shows clearly the influence that the gender of staff has over the gender of the students. This might be reason behind the low number of female trainees. There are some professions which are traditionally reserved to a specific gender; and most of the professions learnt in TVTs used to be for men only. This is the reason why the number of female trainers is much lower than the number of male trainers. It is therefore the reason why female trainees are reluctant to enroll in TVTs.

Table 9: Profile of Tertiary Education Academic staff in 2015

Status of the Institution Gender of the staff	Public	Private	Total
Male	1652	1664	3316
%	80.03%	83.82%	82.07%
Female	412	321	724
%	19.96%	15.93%	17.92%

Source: 2015 education statistical year book & & **National Gender Statistics Report 2016**

Female academic staffs are underrepresented in tertiary education in both public and private institutions. The gap is very dip. Their percentage is below 20%. This is correlated to the number of female students at masters' and PhD level. Masters and PhD degrees are requirements to be recruited to teach at university in Rwanda. The number of female students enrolling at this level is very low. Moreover, female Masters' and PhD graduates, have more opportunity for better jobs in such a way very few of them would go for teaching job. The under-representation of female in the academic staff has a significant implication on the enrolment of female students at tertiary education level.

4. Increased violence against women

In some countries all over the world, women are still victims of violence either physically, psychologically, or sexually. Gender-based violence (GBV) remains a widespread problem in Rwanda. Girls who experience abuse within their homes, at their schools or in their communities suffer from trauma, causing them to perform significantly worse in their studies. On this Huggins and Randell (2007) confirm that when girls encounter harassment, intimidation or violence within their school environments, they may be afraid to attend school, and may decide to abandon their studies. Furthermore, in most of the primary and secondary schools in Rwanda, early and unwanted pregnancies are frequent and they are still impeding full enrolment and participation of girls.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based the findings of this study, it is logical to conclude that considerable progress has been made towards gender equality in Rwandan education system whereby girls in primary and secondary education outnumber their counterparts boys. It also logical to draw conclusion that elimination of school fees in both primary and secondary schools, creating conducive infrastructures, reforming

curriculum and textbooks from gender perspective, and recruitment of more female teachers, and establishment of girls schools contributed to that progress. Based on the findings, there are strong evidences to conclude that poverty, traditional socio-economic practices and beliefs, women under representation in university teaching staff, and the increased violence against women impede the progress to gender parity. To this end, the government and other educational stakeholders were recommended to sensitize encourage girls to girls to enroll in TVT and in tertiary education for their personal and country development, to reduce household burden by covering the indirect and hidden costs of education which continue to impede gender parity, to keep on providing conducive and gender-sensitive infrastructure and amenities in schools to fully achieve gender parity.

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